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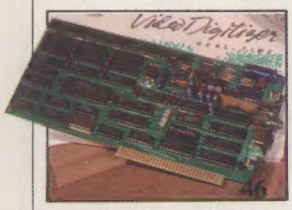
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Panasonic's Program Director and Gemstar's VCR Plus simplify the chore of programming VCRs. Photograph by Bob Forrest

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The Audit Bureau

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Altec Lansing — Currently offers the AHT-2100 surround speakers and plans on developing additional THX home theater speaker products as part of a six-unit system.

Audio Design Associates — Has developed the MPA-5 power amplifier and will soon present the SSD-66 THX-certified surround decoder.

PARA
Professional AudioVideo Retailers Association

Duntech Audio — Produces a THX speaker package that includes three front speakers, two subwoofers, and two surround channel wall speakers.

Fosgate-Audionics — Manufactures the Model Three surround sound processor, which has a THX cinema mode. The company plans a complete line of THX-certified products in the near future.

Lexicon, Inc. — Offers the CP-3 Digital Sound Processor which has modes for both Dolby Pro Logic and Lucasfilm Home THX cinema.

Miller & Kreisel Sound Corp. — Plans on offering a complete home THX Audio Speaker System. The front left, right, and center speakers are currently available. Surround speakers and subwoofers will be made available later this year.

NAD Electronics, Ltd. — This London-based company produces the 100 watts-per-channel 2400THX Power Amplifier.

Snell Acoustics, Inc. — Produces high-end THX loudspeakers including front, surround, and subwoofer speakers. All three types are included in the Snell Multimedia Home THX Audio System.

Technics Audio Group — Offers the Technics Home THX Audio System which consists of a controller, subwoofer system, front speaker system, and surround speaker system. A power amplifier is also available.

Triad Speakers — Currently developing in-wall THX front, surround, and subwoofer speakers in addition to a THX freestanding subwoofer.

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CHANNEL ONE

Camcorder justice

Item: Worried parents in Tennessee hide a camcorder in their living room and catch a baby sitter slapping their child.

Item: A visitor to Texas videotapes a patrolman clubbing a motorist on the shoulder of an interstate. Her tape, played on Texas TV, leads to the officer's suspension.

Three years ago, video newshounds were taping tornadoes and earthquakes. Two years ago, video comedians were swamping *America's Funniest Home Videos* with tapes of clumsy cats. This year, so-called video vigilantes are showing that homemade tapes can get you arrested. Or invade your privacy. Or both, as illustrated by the experience of a Florida couple charged with public lewdness after a neighbor videotaped their lovemaking through the open blinds of their ground-floor apartment.

No laws specifically address the issue of video surveillance, but the question is being raised that perhaps a few should. Is there a need to protect people's privacy and reputations against intrusive camcorder operators?

We think not. Federal laws and guidelines now on the books already do the job; new statutes at the local level would only create a muddle of restrictions. And despite the provocative content of some recent videos, there's little evidence such tapes are being misused. Just as police are finding camcorders to be an excellent tool for recording the reality of roadside arrests, so are citizens, although sometimes with dramatically different results. Far from creating a nation of snoops, the widespread use of camcorders "is a protection against Big Brother," as our senior editor Brent Butterworth put it during a recent debate on NBC's *Today Show*.

While it can be disheartening to watch some of the "amateur" tapes turning up on television, when they expose wrongdoing, by officials or individuals, we're better off for their having been made.

•

Speaking of homemade tapes, check out "On a Wing & a Thumb" in this issue. It describes how Marek Gajewski, a visiting Polish journalist, lived out a long-held fantasy: to hitchhike across America by airplane—skyhike, as he calls it—and videotape the entire journey. It's an inspiring adventure that shows how a camcorder can enrich the very event it's recording.

Stan Pinkwas
Managing Editor

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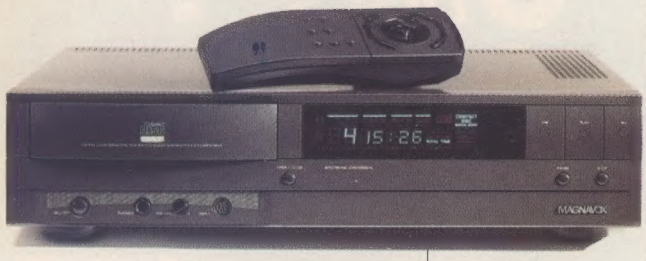
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*Letterbox

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EDITED BY BRIAN CLARK

FEEDBACK



World Standard: Magnavox's CD-I player uses a format that is "forward upgradable, backward compatible and horizontally ubiquitous."

Interactive reaction

Jim French's letter ("Feedback," Aug. '91) stating that CD-I is just a player and, therefore, a less flexible technology than Commodore's CDTV prompts me to point out that CD-I is a world standard providing a common format built as an extension of the compact disc, which we all know is the fastest growing format of this type in history. The principles are simple. CD-I is an idea, not proprietary hardware and restricted software. All manufacturers may make players which will play all CD-I discs from any publisher anywhere in the world. It is forward upgradable, backward compatible, horizontally ubiquitous and works with conventional audio CDs, Kodak's Photo-CD system and video. We believe CD-I offers the same potential for optical publishing that the printing press offered books.

Bernard J. Luskin
President
American Interactive Media

Inflation for trekkies

Laserdisc collectors are a dedicated breed; we support our format not with rentals, but with actual purchases. Unfortunately, this has given many home video companies a license to commit robbery. This time around it is Paramount Home Video and Pioneer LDCA. Single episodes from the series *Star Trek: The Next Generation* will be appearing on laserdisc with a $30-per-episode price tag. The same episodes will appear on videocassette priced at only $15. Previously, episodes from the original *Star Trek* series appeared on laserdisc for $30, but two episodes were offered per disc.

I don't know what has happened to change the previous pricing policy. Perhaps it is because the series turned up in a number of polls as one of the most highly desired titles to appear on disc or maybe it's corporate greed. Either way, I intend to boycott the episodes until their prices are brought back to a reasonable level.

Derek Germano
Commack, NY

Boxed in by cable

Recently, my cable company installed its box and switched over to a fiber-optics system. I have a 25-inch Sony monitor and a late-model VCR. Prior to the changeover I could watch any one channel and record any other channel. Now I have three remotes and a box, yet I can't tape all the channels I could before (while watching others). To do so, the cable company wants me to rent another box for $6.95 a month. Meanwhile, I have to program the VCR and the cable box and I cannot even get an explanation from the company as to how its new system set me back several years.

William Fortune Sr.
Huntington, New York

Nothing to watch

I recently phoned Super Source Video in San Francisco regarding new releases on S-VHS tape and was told they are "still waiting on the studios." This format should at least be available on a mail-order basis and at affordable prices.

William Keene
Marysville, Washington

Editor's reply: A Super Source spokesman told us that S-VHS versions of *Misery* and *The Terminator* are now available and that other deals are in the works.

Video Magazine welcomes your comments. Please include a phone number, but not a return envelope as the volume of mail does not permit replies. Letters may be edited for clarity and space. Address correspondence to Feedback, Video Magazine, 460 West 34 Street, New York, NY 10001.

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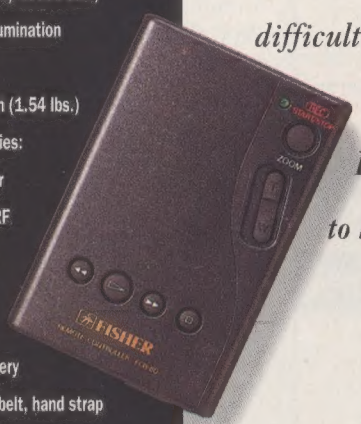
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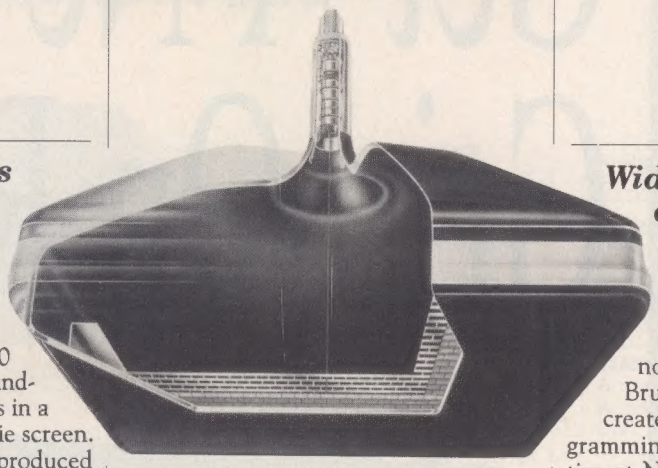
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LATE NEWS

Panasonic launches SuperFlat TVs

Panasonic will soon bring Japan's best-selling TV set to the U.S. The SuperFlat, available this November in 27- and 31-inch sizes, has a tube with 30 percent less face curvature of standard tubes. The new shape results in a picture more like that of a movie screen.

The SuperFlat set we saw produced a picture with impressive contrast, sharpness and color, thanks to new phosphors, an unusually dark face plate and an electron gun design that uses an extra focusing lens. It is capable of 750 lines of horizontal resolution, and includes thoughtful touches like front S-video/video/stereo audio inputs and a headphone jack. New picture-in-picture circuitry with a higher sampling rate produces PIP effects with few of the digital artifacts that plague many other PIP designs. Sound from two-way internal speakers is piped through front grilles that are almost invisible.



Plane Truth: Cross-section of Panasonic's SuperFlat tube, with 30 percent less curvature than standard tubes.

Widescreen TVs: any time now

The excitement over 16:9 widescreen monitor/receivers was raised a notch by Thomson Consumer Electronics' announcement that it has named Bruce Babcock to head a newly created "office of widescreen programming." Babcock, a former executive at NBC and RCA, will be promoting the idea of widescreen programming for all media, prerecorded and broadcast, especially for movies and sports events. Thomson, parent company of RCA and GE, hopes to get widescreen programs on network broadcasts and cable services as soon as possible, and is working with JVC on a widescreen S-VHS format.

No manufacturer has announced a date for introducing a widescreen TV set in the U.S., but Hitachi and JVC have hinted that they may introduce 16:9 sets early next year. Thomson says it will market widescreen sets before an HDTV standard for the U.S. is set in 1993, and Sony and Panasonic have expressed strong interest in the idea.

Another JVC/Sony format war

Sony and JVC are going at it again, this time in the increasingly chaotic videogame field. JVC plans to offer a $700 game console that combines a Sega Genesis videogame with a CD-ROM drive. Final specifications have not been set, but JVC is reportedly considering such capabilities as interactive multimedia and karaoke.

The new game console will compete with Sony's Play Station, which may be introduced as early as this Christmas. It will consist of a Super Nintendo Entertainment System and a drive that plays CD-ROM games using Sony's proprietary Super Disc format. The battle will become even more heated in 1993, when Philips will begin supplying a CD-ROM drive for SNES systems. With valuable markets for videogames and interactive multimedia at stake, it looks like there's a furious format war on the horizon. ■

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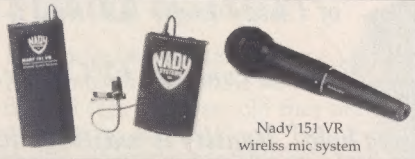


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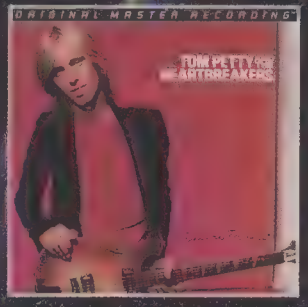
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GAZETTE



Brought to Light: The real Jim Morrison can be found in videos directed by Ray Manzarek (inset).

The Doors are open

The late '60s produced a tidal wave of great music that still thrives today through reissue CDs, classic-rock radio formats—even MTV. But no other band from this era can lay claim to the extraordinary afterlife experienced by the Doors. Lead singer Jim Morrison's face has graced more magazine covers in recent times than it ever did when he was alive, and director Oliver Stone's heavily fictionalized 1991 feature-film bio of the band (LIVE Home Video) introduced millions more to the Doors' unique brand of bluesy psychedelia. Despite the attention, the real story of the band's meteoric rise and still-influential music has been largely lost in the media shuffle.

Enter former Doors keyboardist Ray Manzarek. Using the medium of home video, Manzarek has delivered what may be the only accurate portraits of the band. First came 1985's *Dance on Fire*, an extraordinary tape and laserdisc compilation of old and new film clips and music videos; *Live at the Hollywood Bowl*, released on both formats in 1987, captures the band in its element, on stage and unexpurgated. And the just-released *The Soft Parade—A Retrospective*—like the previous videos, directed by Manzarek—combines unseen archival footage with interviews and musical segments to create the most intimate look at the band yet. (All three are available individually or in a limited-edition boxed set from MCA/Universal.)

Could Manzarek have predicted the band's still-growing popularity, 20 years after its untimely demise? "We certainly had no idea at the time," Manzarek told us recently, "but we also had no idea that Morrison was going to die. I guess it all has at least something to do with Jim's death—the whole James Dean, Marilyn Monroe sort of iconography." Strange as it now seems, "Jim has become the new American Icon."

Though he acknowledges Morrison's legend has virtually become public property, Manzarek takes exception to the artistic license some have taken with the facts of the band's history. "It's a coincidence that *The Soft Parade* is coming out on video at the same time as Oliver Stone's movie," Manzarek says. "But it is, in essence, my rebuttal to Stone's opening argument on the Doors. Now it's my turn—let me show you the real story."

But setting the record straight may prove a daunting task. "I think Stone was interested in showing Jim Morrison as this wild, drinking sex machine. But Jim was an intellectual, a poet. He was gracious, charming and witty, *and* he was a wild, drinking sex machine. Do we have to watch another rock 'n' roller drink himself to death and do terrible things to everyone around him? To play music with Jim Morrison was absolutely marvelous."

Speaking in tongues



Kevin Costner

Dances With Wolves director and star Kevin Costner made film history when he included dialog sequences in the Native American Lakota language (complete with English subtitles) in his Oscar-winning western, but few realized



Native Culture: Doris Leader Charge (left, in *Dances With Wolves*) helps preserve the Lakota language.

the full significance of this milestone. Until recently, the Lakota people were prevented by federal law from speaking their own language even in private, not to mention in front of millions of viewers around the world.

"When I was in school, my parents could have been put in jail if I used the language just among my friends," explains Doris Leader Charge, now an instructor in the Lakota language at Sinte Gleska Community College on South Dakota's Rosebud Reservation. "Nobody spoke it in public until the Freedom of Religion Act in 1973. We just went underground with it." But Leader Charge helped make up for lost time when she served as *Dances With Wolves'* translator, dialog coach and technical adviser, as well as acting in the film in the role of Sioux matriarch Pretty Shield.

Leader Charge had her work cut out for her, juggling four jobs while working on her very first film. But perhaps the biggest challenge was teaching a group of actors—many of them Native American—a language none had ever even heard. And she had just three weeks to pull it off: "Some were very serious about learning the language. To others it was just a job and they wanted to do it phonetically. I let them write it down the way they heard it, then I'd go back and tell them what every word meant so they'd get the expressions right, too. Whoever messed up their lines on a certain day, I'd work with them after supper until one or two in the morning. But it took Kevin [Costner] chewing some people out before everybody learned the language."

Was Leader Charge disappointed none of her students won individual Academy Awards? "These people were all working in a language they hadn't understood before—to me, *that's* acting."

But far more important to Leader Charge is the opportunity presented by *Dances With Wolves* (just released by Orion Home Video) to educate the American public on issues involving Native Americans. "I've been angry all my life," she explains. "I'm 61 years old, and I know what we had at one time and can see what we have now. We [the Lakotas] had the Black Hills stolen from us and have to fight for rights to our own water. And we don't have enough jobs on the reservation—a lot of people live on a $320 government check. At least *Dances With Wolves* is showing people what a beautiful life we had before it was all taken away. I'd go back to that life in a minute."

Video Flashes

Las Vegas, Nevada—This year's Video Software Dealers Association (VSDA) convention, held here in July, brought a flood of new release announcements and an even greater variety of predictions about the future of home video. New satellite technologies may well put the squeeze on traditional video rental stores in the '90s but, to paraphrase Mark Twain, reports of home video's death have been greatly exaggerated. Both tapes and laserdiscs are burgeoning like never before.

Walt Disney Home Video stole the show by announcing the video release of its classic **Fantasia** ("Editor's Choice," Sept. '91), but other announcements also piqued the crowd's interest. Paramount's October release of **The Godfather Part III** will include nine minutes of footage not included in the theatrical version, courtesy of director Francis Ford Coppola. Also set for release is a seven-cassette boxed set of all three *Godfather* movies plus a "making of " documentary called **The Godfather Family: A Look Inside.** The documentary will only be available with the $150 "Collector's Edition."

The laserdisc format received more attention than ever at VSDA. Disc distributor Image Entertainment celebrated by introducing a new catalog of the company's titles—on an eight-inch CAV disc. Made of polycarbonate (the relatively flexible substance compact discs are made of), this laserdisc contains more than 3,500 still frames and includes not only the cover art for each title but such vital information as running time, number of sides, price and audio data. Image will update the $5 disc quarterly.



In a startling show of confidence, Carolco Pictures CEO Peter Hoffman announced that the year's most popular movie, **Terminator 2,** will be released to video in December—even though the film had yet to peak at the box office at the time of his announcement. In previous eras, no mention of the video would have been allowed until the movie had run its course in theaters. But the theatrical and home video markets are now seen as distinct, yet synergistic entities. In other words, Hollywood can't do a thing in 1991 without home video to bring in the big profits.

◆ ◆ ◆

Shop 'Til You Drop. Where do you go to sell or find a used VCR? A camcorder? An editing controller? As of now, you can try the local newsstand. Look for the premier issue of *Video Shopper,* a new bimonthly sourcebook for all manner of things video, with a special classified marketplace for formerly owned equipment. It's a unique new publication, brought to you by the same folks who bring you *Video Magazine* and the quarterly *Video Buyer's Guides.*

VIDEOTESTS



VIDEOTEST 605

SONY *Beta VCR*

Despite the public perception that Beta is dead, Sony continues to produce Beta VCRs because Betaphiles love them, buy them and clamor for new ones. The latest is the SL-HF2100, a version of the 15th-anniversary model released in Japan last year. Sony had not planned to bring it to the U.S., but reconsidered after receiving hundreds of requests for the machine from *Video Magazine* readers.

The SL-HF2100 breaks new ground in user interface design. Unlike any VCR we've seen, it has no buttons or switches, except for a mechanical channel 3/4 RF output selecter on the back. An edge-lit touch panel on the deck and an LCD touch panel on the remote control all functions.

The deck control panel has graphics that designate the function of each spot. The graphics on the remote change into one of 12 configurations to suit the operation at hand. For example, in normal operation, it displays standard transport controls like play, rewind and stop. But when the user hits pause, the panel changes into something like a longitudinal jog/shuttle dial—moving a finger forward accesses forward search speeds; rearward movement sends the deck into reverse.

Its four heads do not serve the usual functions. Instead of two pairs of heads optimized for various speeds and arranged for the best special-effects playback, it uses a pair of larger heads for recording and a pair of smaller heads for playback. This arrangement produces some noise on special effects, but im-

HIGHLIGHTS Sony's SL-HF2100 is one of the most anxiously awaited VCRs in history because it resurrects the Beta Is Super Hi-Band speed, which hasn't been available since the SL-HF1000 ("Videotests," Dec. '86). Betaphiles won't be disappointed, because the results at this speed are exceptional, and picture quality at the other speeds is in line with the best Beta VCRs. Sound quality is excellent. Ease of use is good, and improves to excellent with familiarity. Overall performance is very good to excellent—Betaphiles will love it.

Sony SL-HF2100 Beta VCR



Price: $1,700

Weight & Size (h/w/d): 24.3 lbs; 4 x 18-3/8 x 18 inches

Tape Format & Speeds: SuperBeta; BIs, BIs SHB, BII, BIII

Video Heads: 4

Cue & Review Search: BI—5x, BII—10x, BIII—15x

Fast Forward/Rewind Time: 4 min. for L-500

Inputs: 2—S-video/video/stereo audio, 1—video/stereo audio, 1—RF

Outputs: 2—S-video/video/stereo audio, 1—RF

Front Panel Controls: power, eject, stop, play, rewind (search), fast forward (search), record (2), quick timer, timer record on/off, record mode, antenna TV/VTR, counter reset, counter remain, tape return, index, index mark, index erase, input select, S-video, channel + and -, Super Beta, BIs SHB, stereo L/R, audio insert, video insert, synchro edit, tuner add, tuner erase, auto tracking, record level, tracking/still adjust, sharpness, + and - (to adjust previous three functions), tone on/off, tape select, edit, audio monitor, command mode, auto stereo, CATV and SAP

Remote Pause: Control S, LANC (Control L)

Remote Control: IR wireless with backlit LCD touch panel that changes with function; bidirectional communication with VCR; 12 screens for sleep (inactive), monitor/home, command, clock set, tuner preset, tuner, tuner 10-key, line in, timer set, timer check, shuttle and index counter

Counter Digits: 5—hrs:mins:secs

Audio: linear—mono; hi-fi AFM—stereo

Tuning Method: frequency synthesis

Channel Selectors: programmable scan on VCR; scan plus direct access from remote

Preset Method: add/erase from scan sequence

Broadcast Tuning Range: 2 to 13, 14 to 69

Cable Tuning Range: 125 channels—2 to 13, A-8, A-5 to A-1, A to W, W+1 to W+84

Timer: 8-event/1-month

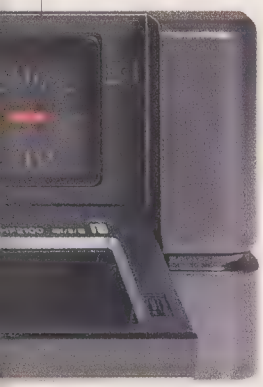
Special Features: still frame, frame advance, slow motion, dual flying erase heads, speed play, audio dub, video dub, insert edit, auto rewind, indexing with add and erase

Absent Features: front-panel inputs, headphone jack, titling/graphics

RESULTS

Horizontal Resolution: 270-300 lines

VIDEOTEST PHOTOGRAPHS: LES MORSILLO



Up to Speed: Sony's SL-HF2100 Beta VCR offers the Beta Is recording speed, previously available only on the discontinued SL-HF1000.

VIDEOTEST 606

JVC

35-inch monitor/ receiver

When we first saw JVC's AV-3591S, it attracted our attention because of its impressive picture and sound. But it held our attention because of its long list of attractive features. Leading the list is Ai, artificial intelligence circuitry that analyzes the user's daytime and evening viewing habits and displays simultaneous, periodically updated displays of the user's three favorite channels for that time of day. It does the same for volume, memorizing the levels used during daytime and evening viewing. When turned on, it starts with the volume set to an appropriate level for the time of day.

A category preview function lets user organize six categories of six channels each for easy preview by type; for example, you could list MTV, VH-1 and the Nashville Network in the music category. Picture-in-picture (PIP) and split-screen require a second video source—pity there isn't a second tuner. However, only a single source is needed for multi-channel index, freeze and retro play.

Its sound system is equally impressive, especially the Dolby Three-Channel Stereo decoder, which searches for sounds (such as dialog) that are in both channels of the audio, and routes them to the set's center speaker. The set has capable main speakers that can be positioned at the front or the rear. Spatial effects circuitry provides room-filling sound without using surround speakers. Other audio facilities include an MTS/

HIGHLIGHTS

The JVC AV-3591S raises 35-inch monitor/receiver performance to new heights. It has Dolby Three-Channel Stereo, which uses a center speaker for dialog. We love its digital video effects—especially split screen, which shows two full images side by side, and retro play, which replays the last 2.4 seconds of video in the PIP window. Its picture and audio quality are very good to excellent, and its operational ease is very good. We rate it very good to excellent—ideal for an A/V system.



proves playback quality. Digital video processing also improves the picture.

The Beta Is Super Hi-Band speed is a welcome addition—it produces a remarkably good picture from standard Beta tape. It also records and plays all other Beta speeds, but does not record or play ED Beta tapes. Other features include dual flying erase heads, S-video inputs and outputs, index mark and erase, an automatic head cleaner and a LANC (Control L) jack for editing compatibility with Sony and Canon camcorders and many Sony VCRs.

The SL-HF2100 barely resembles most VCRs. A dark brown translucent panel covers the front. A clock shines through dimly. The illuminated touch panel occupies the other side of this panel, which folds down. It includes a full set of controls for transport, audio, editing and other functions. The panel

S/N Ratios (dB): luminance, unweighted—45.4 BIs SHB, 45.3 BIs, 45.2 BII, 44 BIII; luminance, weighted—51.6 BIs SHB, 51.6 BIs, 51.8 BII, 50.3 BIII; video, unweighted—42.6 BIs SHB, 42.4 BIs, 41.4 BII, 39.9 BIII; video, weighted—50.9 BIs SHB, 51.5 BIs, 51 BII, 50.3 BIII; chroma AM—43.9 BIs SHB, 43.5 BIs, 43.6 BII, 40.6 BIII; chroma PM—37.4 BIs SHB, 37.5 BIs, 37.5 BII, 36.8 BIII

Audio Frequency Response: hi-fi—20 Hz-20 kHz, +0.5/-2.3 dB; linear (-3 dB)—75 Hz-10 kHz BIs, 75 Hz-7.5 kHz BII, 75 Hz-5 kHz BIII

Hi-Fi Dynamic Range: 81.2 dB

Audio S/N: 43.6 dB

Audio Distortion: hi-fi—0.3%; linear—0.9%

RATINGS

Picture: excellent

Audio: excellent

Ease of Use: good

Overall: very good/excellent



Triple Play: JVC's AV-3591S features Dolby Three-Channel Logic and a center-channel speaker.

SAP decoder, mute level preset and variable-level output for feeding an external audio system.

For improved picture quality there is an S-video input, dynamic color enhancement circuitry, a wide-band comb filter, video noise reduction, a notch filter and wide-band video output. Other useful features include a child timer (which shuts off the set at a preset time), front panel audio/video inputs, dual RF inputs, recordable line output and a learning remote.

The cabinet is only three inches larger than the picture tube on the top and the sides. However, mounting the speakers on the front increases overall width to about 45 inches. In the rear position, the speakers angle outward and forward at about 45 degrees and spread the sound over a wider area. The center channel is especially useful in this setup. Center-channel sound comes from a small grille centered below the picture tube. Basic controls sit to its right. A compartment cover at left hides A/V inputs and the vertical hold control.

The sides have holes for the screws on which the speakers hang. The rear jack panel has two F-connectors for RF input, but no loop-through output to

JVC AV-3591S 35-Inch Monitor/ Receiver

Price: $2,899

Weight & Size (h/w/d): 185.5 lbs; 29-1/2 x 35-1/4 (45 with speakers) x 23-7/8 inches

Screen Size: 35 inches diagonally

Speaker Size: main—4-inch round in bass reflex enclosures; center—2 x 5-inch oval

Type of Tuning: frequency synthesis

Method of Tuning: programmable scan on set; scan plus direct access on remote

Broadcast Tuning Range: 2 to 13, 14 to 59

Cable Tuning Range: 180 channels—2 to 13, A-8, A-4 to A-1, A to I, J to W, W+1 to W+84

Remote Control: IR wireless with exposed buttons for power, menu, digital command menu and PIP (on, off, swap, split, retro play, freeze); cursor left, right, up and down; 10-digit keypad, return, 100+, A/V status/reset, display, mute, channel + and -, volume + and -; under flap—buttons for learn, antenna/cable, system on and off, PIP source, TV, video 1, video 2, VNR, notch, main/SAP, sound mode, mute and programmable keys A through L; VCR power, channel + and -, rewind, play, fast forward, eject, record, stop and pause/still

Inputs: front—S-video/video/stereo audio (parallel with video 1); rear—S-video/video/stereo (video 1), video/stereo audio (video 2), dual RF

Outputs: video/fixed-level stereo audio, variable-level stereo audio

External Speaker Connectors: main—left and right, spring clips

Internal Audio Amplifier Power: front main—12 watts/channel; front center—6 watts

Special Features: artificial intelligence channel display and volume control, Dolby 3-Channel Stereo, center-channel speaker, child lock, PIP, split screen, retro play and video noise reduction

Absent Features: surround amplifier and speakers, headphone jack

RESULTS

Horizontal Resolution: 750-800 lines

Picture S/N (dB): luminance—54.5; video—54.7; chroma AM—63.9; chroma PM—63.6

Accuracy of Colors: very good/excellent

Audio Frequency Response: line—20 Hz-20 kHz, +1.1/-2.4 dB; speaker—50 Hz-15 kHz, +/-3 dB

Audio S/N: 67.9 dB

Total Harmonic Distortion: 0.4%

RATINGS

Picture: very good/excellent

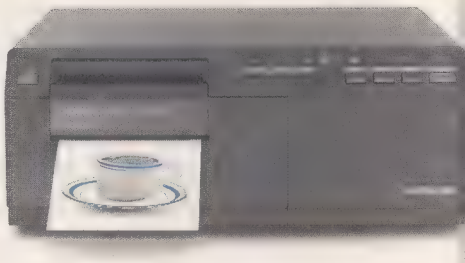
Audio: very good/excellent

Ease of Use: very good

Overall: very good/excellent







No matter how you take your coffee

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feed a cable box, so an external splitter may be needed. The other jacks are for one S-video input, columns with video and stereo audio for video 1, video 2 and line out plus a pair for stereo output.

Exposed on the remote control are power, channel, volume, menu system and PIP controls. A panel swings to the left to reveal source selecters, programmable buttons, VCR controls and special-purpose buttons like video noise reduction on/off.

It's easy to attach the speakers, connect the set to an A/V system, and perform basic operations. However, making picture and sound adjustments by cycling through the options with the function key, then making plus or minus adjustments, is a bit tedious. Most of the fancier options are adjustable only from the remote. You'll need some time to discover and experiment with all the options. Read the manual—it describes all the options in full, so you won't miss any.

The set also offers a self-demo feature that is like an onscreen instruction manual. The most complex operation is teaching the remote the commands for a VCR or other device, but even this isn't too hard as long as the manual is nearby. Operational ease is very good.

The set offers impressive horizontal resolution of 750 to 800 lines. Accuracy of colors is very good to excellent. The picture adjustments cover a wide range, but the steps are a little large. The picture quality of the PIP and other digital effects is good, but a little grainy. On some full-screen effects, color noise is noticeable. Picture quality is very good to excellent.

Audio quality is also very good to excellent. The directionality of the sound and the effects modes are pleasing, but we miss the surround decoder and amplifiers used in last year's model. Most people who go to the trouble of providing for surround sound seem to prefer a dedicated processor, larger amplifiers and speakers, but for a built-in system, this one performs well. Overall performance is very good to excellent. ■

BETA VCR

continued from page 13

next to the cassette hatch houses a multifunction display and various indicators, including one with rotating vanes that show tape direction and speed.

The rear panel has a five-pin LANC jack, one input and two outputs for Control S, and F-connectors for RF in and out. It also has four sets of S-video/video/stereo audio jacks—two for input, two for output. There is a third A/V input with no S-video connector.

The remote control is covered by an LCD screen. It offers two-way communication with the VCR. At the top is an alphanumeric display with two lines of eight characters each. Touch panel controls fill the rest of the screen. Space prevents us from listing every control function on all 12 screens. Suffice it to say that each screen controls a particular function, and all functions you would expect are present.

The new control panel system is so unusual it took us some time to get used to it. It takes practice to hit the touch pads squarely without triggering a neighboring key. It's easy to double-trigger the keys—in other words, enter a command twice when you want to enter it once. This can be a problem with the pause control, when a second, accidental touch restarts the tape. Fortunately, a beep signals that a command is accepted (and yes, the beep can be turned off).

The remote's LCD screen can be

continued on page 74

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VIDEOTEST 607

SONY *Hi8 camcorder*

One of the first questions asked when Sony introduced the 8mm CCD-TR5 two years ago was when a Hi8 version would be available. The disappointing reply was two years. But now the two years are up, and Sony's subcompact Hi8 is even better than we expected. We're already on the waiting list.

The TR81 performs as well as most larger Hi8 camcorders, but it fits easily into a large purse, under a coat or in one of those soft pouches designed to carry 10 audio cassettes. It is more compact and easier to use than its big brothers, Sony's CCD-V5000 and CCD-V801, but it has all the features serious shooters demand.

The most striking is a new lens design. It delivers full-range autofocus—a first for Sony—from infinity to macro using an inner focus mechanism that is faster and more stable than the through-the-lens design used on most Sony camcorders. At full wide-angle, it focuses almost to the face of the lens. Its new manual focus ring feels like the smooth, precise rings found on 35mm SLR

continued on page 74



Pocket-Size Punch: Although Sony's CCD-TR81 is the smallest Hi8 camcorder, it offers a full set of features.

Sony CCD-TR81 Hi8 Camcorder

Price: $1,500

Weight & Size (h/ w/d): 1.8 lbs. without battery and cassette; 4-1/4 x 4-3/8 x 7-1/8 inches

Image Sensor: 1/3-inch CCD, 410,000 pixels

Lens: f/1.6 to 2.2, 8x (7.8-62.4mm) two-speed power zoom

Filter Diameter: 37mm

Autofocus: TTL with auto macro

Minimum Illumination: rated—2 lux; measured—2.9 lux for 50 IRE

Iris: auto/manual with onscreen indicator

Shutter Speeds (sec.): normal (1/60), 1/100, 1/250, 1/1,000, 1/2,000, 1/4,000, 1/10,000

White Balance: switchable—auto, hold, indoor, outdoor

Viewfinder: electronic with diopter, LED indicators for record, battery and cassette, and onscreen indicators for WB mode, wind noise switch, manual focus, Hi8, standby, title mode & color, tape counter, shutter speed, zero memory, fader, zoom/exposure gauge, time zone number/daylight-saving, time zone name, date/time and warnings for dew, low battery, cassette, head clog, clock battery and eject

Viewfinder Controls: diopter focus, brightness

VCR Controls: all—rewind/search, play, fast forward/search, stop, pause and edit search

Microphone: stereo electret condenser with wind noise switch

Jacks: ext. mic, mic power, headphones, remote, DC power for RF adapter and switchable in/out jacks for S-video, video and mono/stereo audio

Tape Formats: Hi8, 8mm

Tape Speeds: SP (record and play), LP (play)

Video Heads: 4

Edit Search: bidirectional—approx. 1x

Cue & Review Search: approx. 7x

Fast Forward/Rewind Time: approx. 8 min. for E6/P6-120

Remote Pause: LANC

Remote Control: IR wireless with hold switch and buttons for start/stop, tele, wide, rewind/search, fast forward/search, stop, play and pause/still

Counter Digits: 5—hrs:mins:secs

Analog Audio: hi-fi AFM stereo

Titles/Graphics: one-page superimposer with scroll, reverse and 8 colors

Special Features: flying erase head, still frame, edit search, counter memory, clock adjustable for time zone with daylight-saving switch, switchable remote control, skip search, trigger-operated auto fader, sound channel selector, insert edit

Absent Features: digital audio, digital effects, time code, indexing, interchangeable lenses, PCM digital audio

HIGHLIGHTS

The Sony CCD-TR81 is the answer to our prayers—a camcorder with the convenience of a subcompact and the picture quality of the Hi8 format. Sony really put a lot of effort into this one, packing it with such useful features as remote control, manual iris and a new through-the-lens autofocus system. The TR81 has a very good picture, good to very good audio and excellent operational ease. Overall performance is very good. To say we recommend it highly is an understatement.



RESULTS

Horizontal Resolution: Hi8—390-400 lines; 8mm—250 lines

S/N Ratios (dB): luminance—41.9 unweighted, 50.1 weighted; video—40.2 unweighted, 47.2 weighted; chroma AM—42.6 Hi8, 44.5 8mm; chroma PM—39.9 Hi8, 39.6 8mm

Audio Frequency Response: 20 Hz-7.5 kHz, +0/-3 dB, -12.7 dE at 20 kHz

Audio S/N: 75.8 dB

Audio Distortion: 0.3%

RATINGS

Picture: very good

Audio: good/very good

Ease of Use: excellent

Overall: very good

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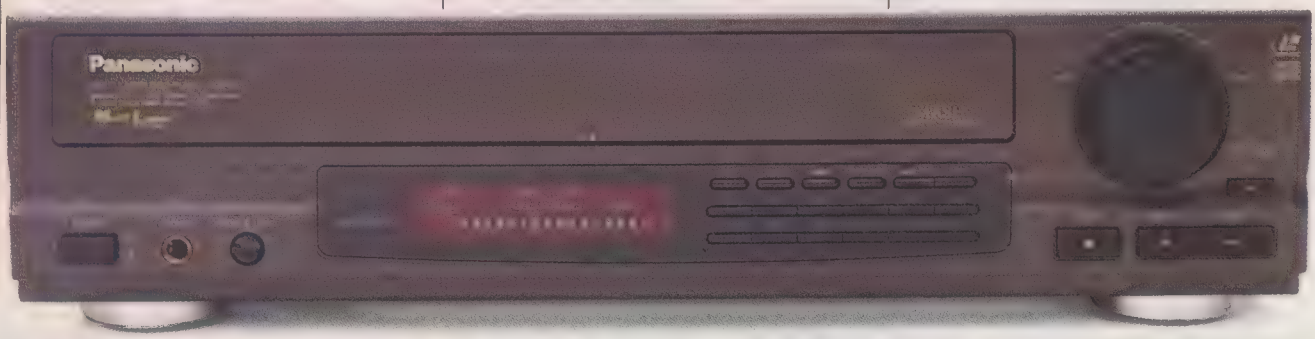


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Low-Cost Luxury: Although Panasonic's LX-101 is one of the most affordable laserdisc players, it offers high-end features like a timebase corrector and clear CLV scanning.

VIDEOTEST 608

PANASONIC *combi player*

Panasonic's LX-101 borrows some of the technology used in the company's $1,400 LX-1000, but costs much less. Like the LX-1000, it features a digital timebase corrector, digital Y/C separation and Matsushita's MASH one-bit digital-to-analog audio conversion. The timebase corrector produces straight, crisp vertical edges and greatly reduces vertical jitter. The MASH D/A converter allows even the faintest sounds to be delivered virtually free of distortion.

Unlike VCRs, which readily produce separate luminance and chrominance (Y/C) signals, laserdisc players require a Y/C separator to feed an S-video jack. Unless this Y/C separator is better than the one already built into your monitor, an S-video jack doesn't do your laserdisc player much good. The LX-101's digital Y/C separator should outperform those of all but the best monitors, making the deck's S-video jack a useful plus.

It does not deliver special effects like still, step and multispeed playback on CLV discs. However, it features a clear-scan mode that displays clear still frames alternating with black frames, which we find much more pleasing than the crude CLV search most budget players produce. On CAV discs, it produces still, step (frame advance) and multispeed play, all without sound. It plays five-inch

continued on page 74

HIGHLIGHTS

High-end VCR features have been trickling down to budget decks for years, and now the same thing is happening with laserdisc players. Panasonic's LX-101 is one of the least expensive combi players available, yet its capabilities mirror those of many costly machines. One of its nicest features is clear search on CLV discs, which is much more useful than than the noisy search produced by most low-cost disc players. It also features a timebase corrector, digital Y/C separation and a MASH digital-to-analog converter like those used in the best Technics CD players. It has very good to excellent picture quality, competitive with some of the best players available. Its audio is excellent and ease of operation is very good for very good to excellent overall performance. At $600, it is a bargain we recommend highly.

Panasonic LX-101 Laserdisc Player



Price: $600

Weight & Size (h/w/d): 20.3 lbs; 4-1/2 x 17 x 16-3/8 inches

Disc Formats: laserdisc—12-inch and 8-inch CAVs and CLVs; CD—5-inch and 3-inch; 5-inch CD-V

Cue & Review Search: about 10x for first 2 seconds, then about 30x; CAV end to end—40 secs. max.; CLV end to end—1 min. 45 secs. max.

Maximum Direct Search Time: 4 seconds

Remote Control: IR wireless with buttons for open/close, display, time mode, intro scan, program, recall, clear, mode, 10+, 10-digit keypad, repeat, repeat A-B, digital/analog/CX, audio level, audio select, stop, pause, play, speed -, speed + and forward/reverse pairs for multispeed, still/step, scan and skip

Counter Digits: chapter/track—1 through 16 with over indicator; index/program—2, frame—5 or time—4 (mins:secs)

Program Start Locator/Index/Cue: chapter/track, index, time or frame, A-B repeat

Audio: analog FM—stereo/2 ch. with MASH D/A conversion

Special Features: still frame, frame advance, slow motion (7 steps, as slow as one frame every 3 seconds), speed play to 3x, digital TBC, digital Y/C separation, MASH D/A conversion, shuttle dial on player, programmed play up to 20 chapter/tracks, edit play, warp and onscreen displays including audio level, time remaining and total time

Absent Features: jog dial, special effects on CLVs, digital effects

RESULTS

Horizontal Resolution: 420 lines

S/N Ratios (dB): luminance—49.3 unweighted, 49.9 weighted; video—47.2 unweighted, 50.2 weighted; chroma AM—44.4; chroma PM—40.4

Audio Frequency Response: digital—20 Hz-20 kHz, +0.3/-0.2 dB; analog—20 Hz-20 kHz, +1.3/-1.8 dB

Audio S/N (dB): digital—102; analog—65.6

Audio Distortion: digital—less than 0.02%, analog—0.4%

RATINGS

Picture: very good/excellent

Audio: excellent

Ease of Use: very good

Overall: very good/excellent

VIDEO SHOWCASE



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For more information contact: Fisher Audio/Video, 21350 Lassen St., Chatsworth, CA 91311; Tel: 818-998-7322.

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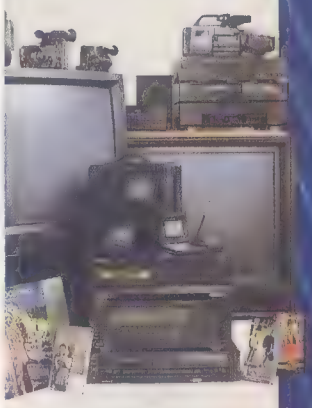
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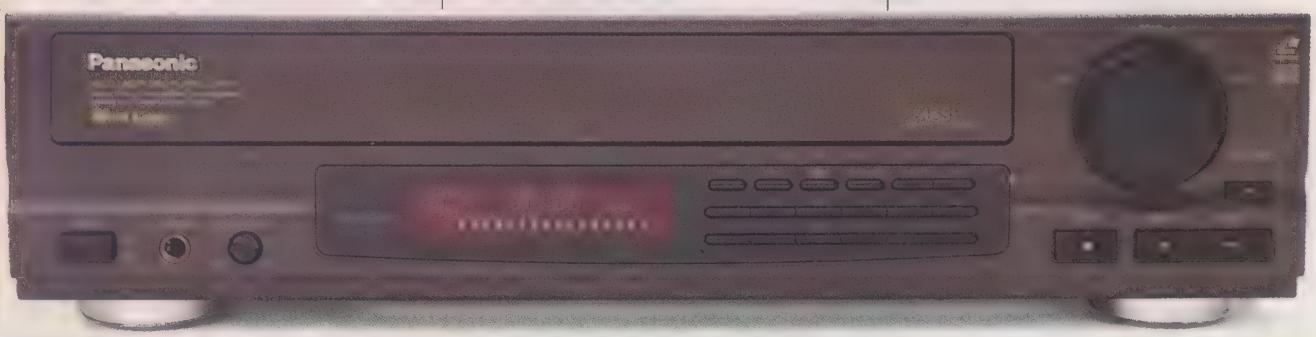
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Low-Cost Luxury: Although Panasonic's LX-101 is one of the most affordable laserdisc players, it offers high-end features like a timebase corrector and clear CLV scanning.

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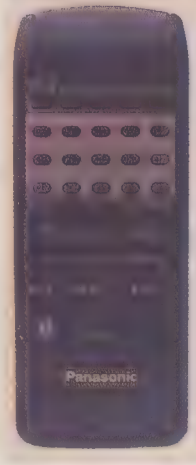
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Panasonic LX-101 Laserdisc Player



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VIDEO SHOWCASE



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OP/TECH USA's new Compact Video Strap takes the strain out of carrying a camcorder. Using soft, durable neoprene and a unique "comfort stretch" backing, this product is the most comfortable video strap available. It makes even the heaviest camcorders feel 50 percent lighter and 100 percent more comfortable, and is available in seven fashion colors. For even more convenience, OP/TECH USA offers the Fat Cap, a revolutionary lens cover. It attaches to a lens or filter, the base stays in place while the hinged, spring-loaded lid can be flipped open by a flick of the thumb. The Fast Cap is the last cap you'll ever need.

For more information, contact OP/TECH USA, 290 Arden Dr., Belgrade, MT 59714; (406) 388-1377.

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Circle Showcase # 4

CAMCORNER

When time is short, edit as you shoot.

BY JAMES CARUSO
AND MAVIS ARTHUR

Editing is a necessary part of making videotapes, a time-consuming task that can be frustrating as well as satisfying. But there's a way to edit home videos that can save time, effort and money, while teaching you to see the subjects you're shooting in a very different light.

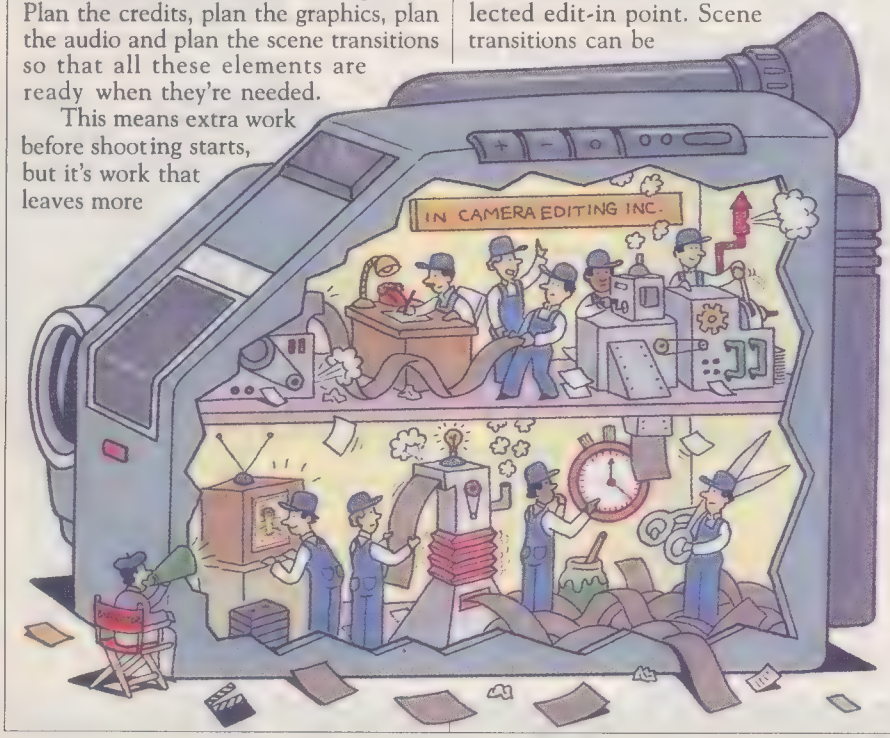
The way to do this is to edit as you shoot. We used this technique recently to create a video we were asked to produce for a local hospital. The hospital didn't have funds for a full-scale production, but we eliminated most costs by editing as we shot, and finished the tape much more quickly.

The technique is not a replacement for conventional editing, but it's a powerful option to have at your command—especially because the secret is so simple. In fact, it can be summed up in one word: planning. Plan the order of your shots, then shoot them in sequence. Plan the credits, plan the graphics, plan the audio and plan the scene transitions so that all these elements are ready when they're needed.

This means extra work before shooting starts, but it's work that leaves more time during shooting to concentrate on the creative side—how shots are to be framed, which camera moves to use, story pacing and the like. And it more than pays for itself in time saved from post-production tasks.

The technique isn't appropriate for all subjects, and shouldn't be used to replace conventional editing, which offers capabilities and performance levels that can't always be matched in the field. But when opportunity knocks, you can save time and energy by editing as you shoot—and experience the unique exhilaration of seeing your tape come together as it's being shot.

Moreover, newer camcorders—from ultra minis, like JVC's VHS-C GR-AX10, to top-of-the-line models, like its S-VHS-C GR-S505—have features that make this style of shooting easier. Camcorders with flying erase heads, like Ricoh's Hi8 R-808H, smooth scene transitions. Others allow users to shift automatically from record mode to last-shot review then back to record at the selected edit-in point. Scene transitions can be enhanced with wipes, freeze frames and simulated dissolves. Or shooters can freeze a title card, then scroll the artwork or superimpose words over live video.



CHRIS REED

The starting point of an edit-as-you-shoot project is to write out a plan listing all the elements that will require attention. In particular, it should include the title of the production, the dialogue and other audio effects (including music), the people and places to be shot, and any title cards, credits, charts or other pieces of art needed to help viewers understand or enjoy the tape.

The tape we shot focused on a new facility for expectant mothers and newborn infants. The hospital needed a short video to explain how the center worked, to be used at gatherings of parents. We started with a title, *The Birth Center.* It's not an exciting or a clever title, but it describes what the tape is about and helped to keep us on track as we shot.

Next, we worked through the audio problems. Recording high-quality sound on location is among the most difficult challenges videomakers face because there are so many uncontrollable variables. If dialogue is to be recorded, the first question to ask is: What other sounds are already present in each location? If these sounds add to the story, they should be included. If they detract from the story, they should be eliminated, if possible.

If you plan to record live comments, you'll need a separate microphone. While a camcorder's lens can see as far as the horizon, its built-in microphone can only pick up sounds in the immediate vicinity. A handheld or lavaliere mic will make it possible to reach out and catch the voices you need. A headphone will let you monitor the audio as you shoot.

The Birth Center production presented unique audio problems in that a hospital is not a quiet environment. In

James Caruso's and Mavis Arthur's latest book is Video Lighting and Special Effects *(Prentice Hall, 1990).*

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fact, we felt that sounds of phones ringing, people being paged and the like would be so distracting that we decided to omit an audio narration track. At each screening of the video, a representative from the birth center would deliver the voiceover live.

This approach had several advantages. It made each presentation more personal. It also kept the production within our very limited budget because it eliminated the need for an audio recording studio. Most important, it eliminated all the audio problems associated with location recording. However, we decided to lay in a music track under the entire show by doing one edit after the shooting was complete.

Even though the audio problems were resolved, we still could not start shooting because we did not have the most important part of any video production plan—the script. The script includes not only the words that are going to be said, but other information necessary to produce the tape, especially one that's shot and edited at the same time.

Most people think a script is hard to write. Even the head nurse who had been conducting live tours of the birth center felt this way. We're here to tell you a basic script is not difficult. We turned the nurse into a scriptwriter just by having her talk into a small audio recorder on her next tour. With a little polishing, this became our written script, which was invaluable even though the text did not go on an audio track.

Working out the video was easy at this point because the script gave us the information we needed to complete our edit-as-you-shoot production plan. It told us:

- Which locations to shoot.
- The shot sequence, from the title to "THE END."
- The length of each shot—essentially how long it took to say the words describing a particular feature of the center.

The next part of the plan was to time the script's descriptive statements in sequence. Then, using the speaking times, we wrote out a shot list from the script to use as we were shooting.

For example, the narration welcoming expectant parents to the hospital and describing what they could expect upon their admission took 60 seconds. The dialogue told parents to go through the main entrance if they arrived between 7 a.m. and 11 p.m. and to use the Emergency Room (ER) entrance if they arrived later.

Based on this approach, our shot list looked like the portion below. We used standard film abbreviations for terms like close-up (CU), wide shot (WS), medium wide shot (MWS) and point of view (POV).

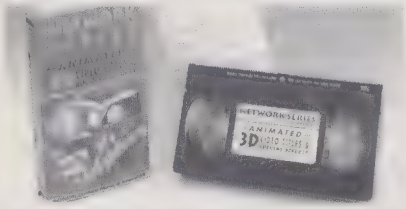
SHOT & DESCRIPTION. . .LENGTH
1. Fade in to CU of hospital sign (the title). . . . . .0:15 seconds
2. Tilt down and pan to WS of front doors 0:08
3. CUT to MWS POV walking to admission desk 0:07
4. CUT to CU of Emergency Room sign from street, pan to ER doors . . .0:07
5. CUT to POV through doors to desk 0:10
6. CUT to WS of desk 0:05
7. CUT to pan of admission forms. . . . . .0:08 END

Total for sequence. 0:60

We timed all the camcorder moves with a stopwatch before we rolled tape. When we started recording, we used the counter indicator in the viewfinder to time the shots so they would match the narrative time in the script.

The timing of a shot is critical, especially if it includes a move. In other

continued on page 100



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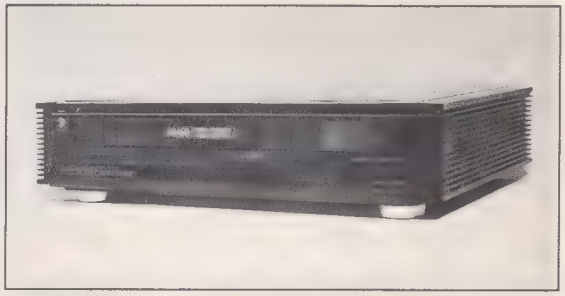
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TOMORROW

Interactive CDs: Are they hot...or not?

BY STEVE DITLEA

What if someone introduced a new home video format and nobody cared? In an era of sophisticated marketing and customer testing, it seems unlikely the consumer electronics industry would shoot itself in the assets, yet this could happen with the delivery to stores of the first new home entertainment format of the '90s. Spurred by the spectacular success of CDs, the multinational standard bearers of consumer electronics are betting that similar digitally encoded, five-inch aluminum and plastic platters will heighten viewer involvement with video by giving passive couch potatoes active, varied opportunities to control the course of new entertainment and educational programs. But after years of tweaking, this could be a format whose time has finally come...and already gone.

Such thoughts came to mind during a pioneering trade show, the Home-Media Expo, held recently at the Beverly Hilton Hotel. The expo marked the first time such leading-edge consumer multimedia systems have been exhibited in the heart of show biz country, in this case before blue chip audiences of hardware and programming insiders.

The atmosphere was reminiscent of '80s trade shows devoted to the then-promising field of videotext. Back then, major corporations were also throwing money at a nascent technology. Unfortunately, after several costly false starts, the sole surviving consumer videotext service in the U.S. is Prodigy, a joint venture of IBM and Sears. With many of today's interactive video advocates suffering from "prestalgia"—an uncritical longing for what hasn't yet happened—their efforts may similarly disappoint consumers.

The expo spotlighted the imminent face-off between rival CDTV and CD-I video formats. Home computer maker Commodore boasted that its CDTV system, built around the Amiga 500 computer, had already begun shipping. It also proudly demonstrated the latest CDTV breakthrough: full-motion video using a resolution grid of 160 by 100 picture elements (about a quarter of a standard TV screen) at 15 frames per second (half the standard video rate) without compression. The addition of data compression formulas using the chip standard recently agreed to by MPEG (Motion Picture Expert Group) should bring CDTV up to snuff for displaying full-length movies. The MPEG chip is expected to be available to consumers by 1992.





Games Galore: NEC's TurboGrafx CD whodunit *Sherlock Holmes, Consulting Detective* (above) and the CD-I offering *ABC Sports Golf: Palm Springs Open* (left).

In the meantime, leading-edge CDTV programs at the expo—like a world atlas with detailed maps and snippets of traditional music—suffered from a discernible lag time between when information is requested and when it is retrieved from the disc, long enough at least for viewers to lose interest. However, as Commodore's Nolan Bushnell observes, recalling an old joke about two campers confronted by a grizzly bear, "We just have to outrun the other guy."

The other guy in this race is Philips, which is about to launch CD-I, based on an interactive CD video standard already adopted by most consumer electronics giants, including Sony, Matsushita (Panasonic), Pioneer, Sanyo and Yamaha. The first consumer CD-I players, available in October for $1,400, will cost more than their CDTV counterparts, priced under $1,000, and will also have to wait for MPEG chips to play full-length movies. But CD-I won't be compatible with CDTV.

This means we may see a replay of divisive format wars of the sort that pitted Beta against VHS in the early days of VCRs, a situation which is bound to turn off consumers in the mass market, where a uniform standard has to prevail. After all, as Bernard Luskin, president of American Interactive Media (AIM), Philips' CD-I software development firm, notes: "All toasters toast toast."

There is lots of talk in CD video circles about the need for a so-called killer ap, an application that will make interactive video irresistible, the way superior classical music reproduction sparked CD player sales. When asked what sort of "ap" might motivate someone to plunk down $1,400 for a CD-I player, AIM

chief Gordon Stulberg, former head of 20th Century Fox, indicated that no single program will be enough, but rather a combination of applications for an entire family. However, he did cite enthusiastic reaction at the exhibit to *ABC Sports Golf: Palm Springs Open*, a golf simulation only marginally more vivid than games already on personal computers.

When pressed, Stulberg says CD-I players will lead to lower costs for prerecorded videos. Once MPEG chips are available, 140 minutes of full-motion video on two CDs would cost 40 percent less to manufacture than a comparable videocassette. In an era when the sale of prerecorded tapes is surpassing rentals, this could be significant. But would the savings be passed on to consumers?

Rival interactive executives Bushnell and Stulberg agree on one issue: Ground-breaking programs will have to come from new talents. Many of CDTV's first programs come from computer game publishers like Spectrum Holobyte, Interplay and Maxis, but there doesn't seem to be a killer ap among them. However, by unleashing CDTV on the popular Amiga platform, Bushnell hopes to encourage home developers who understand interactive video.

The expo also provided a unique opportunity to see the best pioneering programs interactive video has to offer. For instance, NEC's new TurboGrafx CD game *Sherlock Holmes, Consulting Detective* incorporates ample video sequences of live actors, shot in period costumes. Even more intriguing is a VCR-based branching video that toy maker Hasbro never marketed. *Night Trap* is a B-movie-style tale about vampires stalking teen-age girls who can only be saved by the intervention of a button-pushing game player. X-rated programming too was represented—by computer artist Mike Saenz with *Virtual Valerie*, an erotic CD-based cartoon.

Dollars alone do not guarantee success. For example, Warner New Media, a venture of Time-Warner Inc., calls "The Whole Megillah" its ultimate vision of interactive music videos. But the snore-inducing result, *The Fleetwood Macro Album*, only allows viewers the dubious option of switching instantaneously between concert and MTV-style video versions of the group's greatest hits, as well as among interviews, documentary sequences and historical backgrounders on musical styles. ABC News Interactive takes a similarly unimaginative approach with titles like *Mission the Moon* and *Drugs and Substance Abuse* that seem unabashedly targeted at boards of education.

For some observers, rushing into interactive programming for systems hobbled as yet by their inability to display full-screen, full-motion video makes little sense, except as hype for the technology. Technovisionary Ted Nelson, who first wrote about interactive "hypermedia" more than 20 years ago, criticizes "the Hollywoodization of interactive stuff, the gossip, the deal making, the stupid catch phrases and the lemming behavior before the technology is ready." Another critical viewpoint comes from Robert Stein, head of the Voyager Co., a leading developer of interactive laserdiscs. Noting that the standard being set for CD video is "barely as good as VHS," Stein cautions against a headlong plunge into the technology. "Are we willing to have 10 years of limited quality," he asks, "when the point is not to sell boxes, but to do something people will like?" ■

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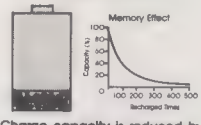
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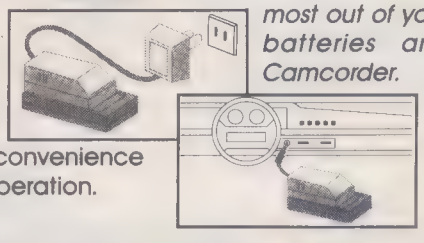


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Q&A

BY RODERICK WOODCOCK

Resolution charts, 8mm VCRs and disc flicker

Q I'm interested in measuring the horizontal resolution of my S-VHS camcorder. Can you tell me where I could obtain a test pattern for this purpose?

Charles L. Melcher
West Redding, Connecticut

A Video resolution charts are available from professional video dealers. If you want to purchase one by mail, try Nalpak Sales, 1937-C Friendship Drive, El Cajon, CA 92020.

Q I've been considering an 8mm VCR, specifically the Sony EVS-550. Are there any other 8mm VCR brands besides Sony? Will the EVS-550 give me the best possible results off premium cable channels like HBO and Showtime? Is there any other deck (other than Hi8, which I'm not interested in) which would work as well?

Ray N. Haliburton
Montgomery, Alabama

A No. Sony's only other current table-model 8mm VCRs are the Hi8 EVS-900 and the EV-C3, which has no tuner. Sony also offers three Video Walkman TVCRs that come with tuners, but have only limited programmability. Kodak and Sanyo made 8mm VCRs in the early days of the format, but those models have long since been discontinued.

However, the EVS-550 would be great for cable recording. Its 194-channel, cable-capable tuner is versatile enough to receive all unscrambled channels your system may be transmitting. But be warned that premium channels are handled differently by various cable companies. If your service uses a converter or decoder box, any VCR you use with it may be confined to Channel 3 or Channel 4 for all recordings. Check with your cable company to ascertain what its requirements are before you buy this or any VCR.

Q What causes some of the still frames on my laserdiscs to jitter? Occasionally, there's sort of a second image in the background.

Rob Simmons
Ventura, California

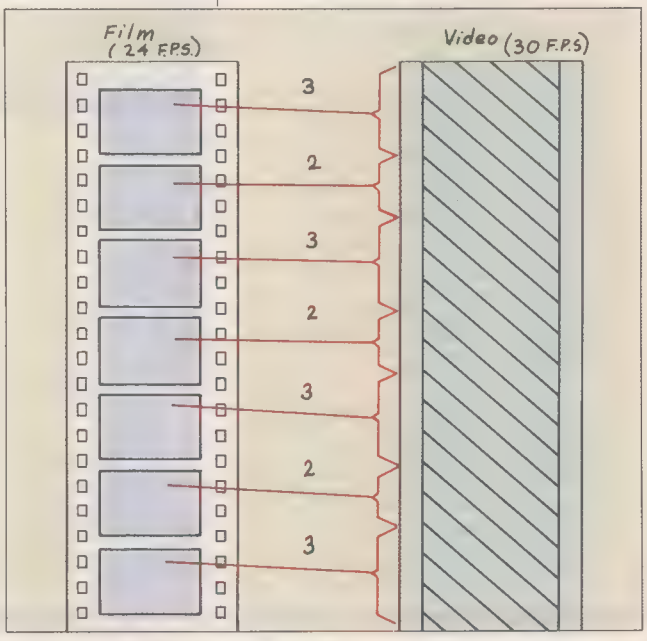
A The problem is caused by a poor transfer. All films transferred to video have to allow for the discrepancy between the framing rates employed by the two media. Film is shot at 24 frames per second, while video uses 30 fps. If you try to transfer film straight from the projected image to a video camera, this difference causes flicker and an annoying black bar that floats through the picture.

Professional film-to-video converters, or telecines, eliminate the bar by alternating the number of frames alloted for each video field. The first frame of film converts to three video fields, while the next frame converts to two fields. This process, called "3:2 pulldown," is repeated so that 24 frames of film (one second) equal 60 fields (30 frames, or one second) of video. This removes the black bar, but a related problem—flicker—can crop up if the transfer isn't done correctly.

Flicker occurs when fields from two different video frames are recorded together as a single disc frame. The effect is compounded if the subjects in the frames don't move. Careful attention to field dominance—the field on which a new picture appears—will solve the problem, but the sequencing must be maintained throughout an entire film, with careful attention also paid to the edit points where the scene changes.

Early VCRs with special effects would often produce flicker on still frames, because the heads would read conflicting parts of adjacent frames. But the problem was solved ingeniously, by designing heads that would read only one field of video instead of two, scanning it twice in order to produce a frame. ■

Video Magazine welcomes your questions. Please include a phone number, but not a return envelope as the volume of mail does not permit replies. All letters may be edited for clarity and space. Address queries to Q & A, Video Magazine, 460 West 34 Street, New York, NY 10001.



Flicker Fixer: To avoid flicker and black bars caused by mismatched frame rates, professional film-to-video converters alternate the numbers of video fields used to record each film frame, a process called 3:2 pulldown.

KRISTINA JUZAITIS

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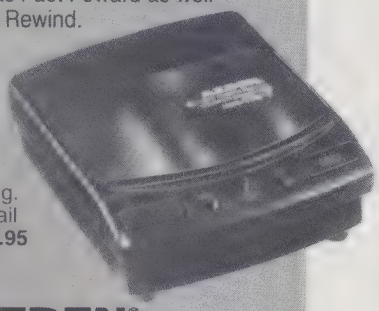
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HANDS ON TEST

BY FRANK BEACHAM

PANASONIC PT-10L

LCD mini-projector powers maxi image

Have you ever encountered a new technology and felt immediately that the device using it could change the way we live? It happened to me in 1968 when I was working as a cameraman at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. Toting more than 40 pounds of film gear, I happened to glance at a young Japanese man carrying a small portable TV camera and videotape recorder—the original Sony Portapak. Instantly, I knew I was seeing the future.

It's happened again with Panasonic's PT-10L LCD Video Projector, the first such portable unit available in the U.S. And I'm still not sure I believe it. When introduced to this little gadget—which would fit loosely inside a basketball—I was told it would project a video image from 14 to 70 inches in size on any wall or screen. It seemed unbelievable. Could a video projector really be small enough to lift with my little finger?



Palm-Size Revolution: Panasonic's PT-10L is the smallest video projector available in the U.S.

Snug in its oval case, I slung the projector over my shoulder and took it home for a run-through. The bus ride was an easy tote. Weighing only six pounds, the projector is heavier than a small camcorder, but lighter and more compact than most notebook computers. A traveler's dream.

Hookup was also a piece of cake. A simple RCA video connector plugged in from a VCR, a TV set, a camcorder or any other conventional video source is all that's needed. A mono audio input is present to serve the projector's small 0.8-watt internal speaker. Setup and adjustment are similar to those of a slide projector. Find a screen or some blank wall space, as I did, and aim the projector. Turn out the lights. Rotate the front lens assembly until the image is in focus. Once in focus, tweak the picture with the side-mounted brightness, color and tint controls, if needed. That's it.

The picture is fair, but very watchable, both at the largest sizes and at sizes as small as nine inches. However, the room must be dark or the picture all but disappears. And while the picture is watchable, it's not up to the level of conventional projection sets. Resolution, based on a laserdisc-generated chart, appears to be 170 to 180 lines.

I looked at video from a laserdisc, a VHS VCR and a TV tuner. The block-like pixels, which are very noticeable in images with fine detail and titles, give the picture a chunky "early computer" look. But this is the downside of using a new technology that's still rapidly developing. Although Fuji is introducing an even smaller model in November, the PT-10L, available since August, marks a massive downsizing of the technology. LCD projectors by Sharp and other manufacturers weigh 30 pounds or more and are much bulkier.

Panasonic achieved this miniaturization by using a single LCD, instead of the three typically present, and less resolution is the price paid for such portability. However, the price you'll pay, $1,400, though considerable, is a fraction of the cost of other LCD projectors.

Panasonic markets the PT-10L through its industrial products division as a portable display device for business applications. But the machine is far more. Imagine big-screen movies indoors or out, anywhere one can find a white wall or string up a sheet. Drive-in movies without the drive-in. As LCD projection improves, will it do for video what the Walkman did for sound? Looking at the PT-10L, it's possible. ■



September 10 was the date the premier issue of an exciting new magazine made its debut. Called VIDEO SHOPPER and published by VIDEO Magazine, it's designed for you, the enthusiast who rolls up his sleeves and works with video!

Articles will stress how-to-do-it information, editing, pre- and post-production, taping techniques, program collecting and other topics of special interest. An emphasis on new products and accessories will help you add on, upgrade and enhance your video system. And in every issue, you'll find *Video Trader*, our very successful 12-page newsletter that has become the ultimate marketplace for pre-owned video. It will continue as part of VIDEO SHOPPER and contain hundreds of ads from people just like you who want to buy, sell or trade anything and everything related to video.

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READER FORUM

EDITED BY BRIAN CLARK

3-D or not 3-D? Videophiles still dream of a perfect system.

Quest or quackery? That's what we asked readers when we ran Steve Ditlea's "3-D, The Next Generation" in our August issue. The response overwhelmingly showed us that readers have fond memories of 3-D films and even fonder hopes for its future in video. Despite disappointments with some recent 3-D efforts and doubts about some processes, your letters gave 3-D research a strong vote of confidence. Here's a sampling of what you had to say:

Steve Ditlea's article is timely and interesting. Like HDTV, 3-D TV would be an advance in realism—and the time to set standards for 3-D hardware is surely now, before the HDTV standard is finalized. HDTV sets should also contain the hardware necessary for 3-D TV viewing.

I have a pair of LCD-shutter goggles made by Haitex that I use for my Amiga computer. They let me view computer-generated 3-D images by means of field-sequential stereoscopy. The technology is better than that used for the *Hondo* broadcast, but it does have the drawbacks Ditlea mentions (30 frame/second flicker and a darkened picture). No doubt these problems could be solved if 3-D were to be incorporated in the HDTV's design, rather than treated as an afterthought.

Alan Reed
Rockford, Illinois

As a real 3-D fan I would certainly watch new 3-D movies. But I will never again watch any requiring blue-and-red glasses, such as those needed for the recent airing of *Hondo*. This was pure torture. I have no problem with solidizing conventional movies. However, they would for the most part lack any of the special effects (arrows, spears, etc. coming out of the screen) which are, after all, the best part of 3-D movies.

Mel Schelich
St. Louis, Missouri

I was fortunate to grow up in the late '50s and '60s when interest in 3-D films was keen, if sporadic. Many of the films I saw suffered from poor scripts, unbalanced projection or both. But one event changed my opinion of 3-D for life. At a small San Francisco revival theater, I saw the 3-D film *Inferno*, perfectly projected, and starring a captivating Rhonda Fleming.

The desert photography was breathtaking, and the depth of field and crystal-clear relief were so intense that sand crystals seemed to sparkle before me. So



Screen Dream: Rhonda Fleming sizzled in 3-D.

did the glint in Rhonda Fleming's beautiful eyes. She was overwhelming, with skin that delicately glowed in 3-D relief. I shall never forget how alluring she looked and how, with the help of 3-D projection, Rhonda placed me under her spell in that theater long ago.

Marc Levy
San Diego, California

Since my teens I have had an interest in 3-D. When I became involved with the World Film Festival (the second largest film festival in the world), it was as technical director of a 3-D series in 1982. I am still involved with the festival, and now also own a repertory house which, of course, is equipped to show most formats of 3-D. And we do so on a regular basis.

No one wanted to believe in 3-D more than I. But all my years of interest have led me to conclude that 3-D will never be more than a novelty.

Currently, 3-D is the plaything of technicians. To succeed, the technology has to be given to those who have the creative ability to explore new territory. Digging up 40-year-old movies (and the outdated techniques) that didn't work in 1954 won't make them look any better today, even with new wizardry.

And the best that solidizing movies like *King Kong* would do is to create a series of cut-out planes like those in pop-up books. True 3-D affords a solidity that is lifelike and that creates in the mind an unusual and interesting experience.

Al Rush
Toronto, Ontario

Picture-perfect, flicker-free, true stereoscopic 3-D is available right now to anyone with a camcorder! To create your own breathtaking 3-D, do the following: Point a camcorder out the right window of a car. Set the lens to wide-angle, turn the autofocus off and set the focus to infinity. Have a friend drive about 5 mph and without moving the camcorder, record the passing scenery.

Next, make your own "Pulfrich glasses" to view your 3-D video. Take a pair of the darkest, cheapest sunglasses you can find, and pop out the left lens. The darkened image hitting the right eye is delayed one video scan by the brain before being combined with the image from the left eye. The two images are true separate views of the scene taken from slightly different perspectives. I hope videographers recognize the enormous potential of this simple technique and make it commonplace on TV.

Bob Kallweit
Katy, Texas

Editor's note: Bob Kallweit sent us a tape and two pairs of glasses and he speaks the truth. His tape is crystal-clear and fully dimensional. ■

TECHNICALLY SPEAKING

Blue Lagoon's 8mm secret

BY JAMES CARUSO
AND MAVIS ARTHUR

You won't see 8mm video footage flashing off the silver screen if you catch *Return to the Blue Lagoon*, this summer's sequel to *Blue Lagoon*, 1980's romantic smash starring Brooke Shields. But the film couldn't have been made without it, certainly not within the time and budget its filmmakers had to work with. Viewers actually did see a few seconds of a dramatic shark attack shot in video, but more intriguing than the transfer is the extent to which consumer-level camcorders, VCRs and TVCRs were relied on for key production jobs.

Even in an industry where it's no longer uncommon for film crews to employ video, the level of integration was remarkable. *Return*'s crew used the raincoat ready for instant use during the shoot. Why a raincoat? Because the idyllic locale—meant to represent a deserted isle the film's shipwrecked lovers inhabit—was a remote South Pacific island in the Fiji chain, where it rained almost every one of the film's 78 shooting days. Raincoats (and hard hats for protection from falling coconuts) were the uniform of the day, every day.

Why 8mm? Because it fits easily into raincoat pockets, says Graham, a Hollywood veteran who's also directed *Billy the Kid* with Val Kilmer and *Mussolini*, starring George C. Scott. Graham wasn't alone in his choice. In all, 15 crew members brought along personal camcorders (14 8mm units and one S-VHS model) to help them in their work.

First and foremost, 8mm was used for the dailies or rushes, which allow directors to screen each day's shooting to make sure all the shots are on the mark. Usually, film from a day's shoot is developed and printed overnight, then rushed back to the director for next-day viewing. In this case, the dailies actually took a week. The film—all 385,000 feet of it—was shipped in daily batches from Fiji to Australia, site of the nearest development labs, where it was processed and transferred, first to one-inch videotape in both NTSC and PAL standards, then to 8mm. The 8mm PAL version went back to Fiji, while the NTSC ver-

continued on page 98



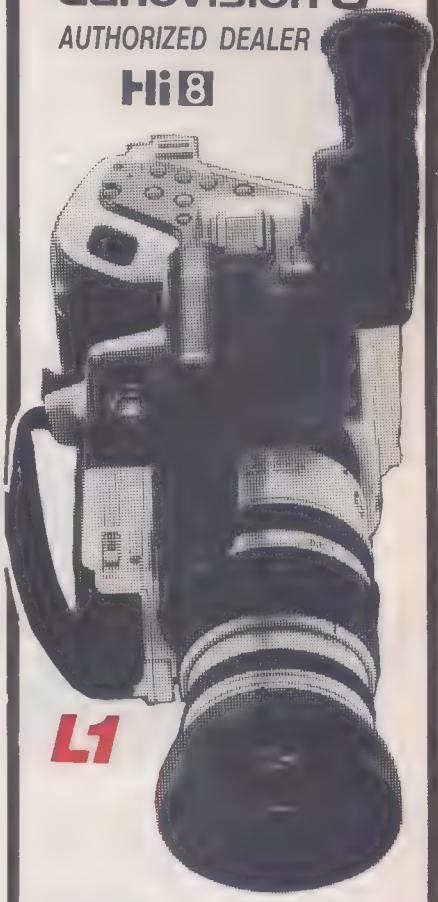
Behind the Scenes: Using 8mm dailies on a Sony Video Walkman, cinematographer Bob Steadman (left) and director Billy Graham check continuity during the production of *Return to the Blue Lagoon* (below), with Brian Krause and Milla Jovovich.

equipment to track shooting progress, scout locations, check continuity, match lighting situations and prepare the edit. Their experience demonstrates the sometimes surprising uses to which home video equipment can be applied.

The key was Sony's tiny TR4 camcorder, the smallest member of the Handycam family. Billy Graham, *Return*'s director, kept one constantly in his

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EDITED BY BRIAN CLARK

NEW PRODUCTS



Minolta adds full-size camcorder

Minolta's Master Series-V 118 full-size VHS camcorder offers plenty of features for creative videography. Interval recording is available at one, two or five minutes, as well as 30 seconds. One-second recording bursts can also be activated at the touch of a button. The two-page character generator has a 16-character-per-page memory. An f/1.4, 8x power zoom lens uses a 1/3-inch, 270,000-pixel CCD to deliver a picture in light as low as 2 lux. Exposure, white balance and iris are automatic.

Price: $1,153.

For additional information, circle No. 157 on Reader Service Card.



JVC adds 'Intelligent' systems to VCR

JVC's HR-D920 hi-fi VHS VCR uses JVC's new "Intelligent" systems for display, access and control. The Intelligent Control system has a built-in video processor with five picture modes—enhanced, tape dub, soft pix, sharp pix and normal. The 920 also has AV Compu Link, a JVC control system that integrates components to cut down on button pushing. For example, turning off the amplifier turns off all other components, except the VCR if it is recording at the time. Additional features include an MTS decoder and JVC's oval-cut DA-4 head system.

Price: $549.95.

For additional information, circle No. 158 on Reader Service Card.



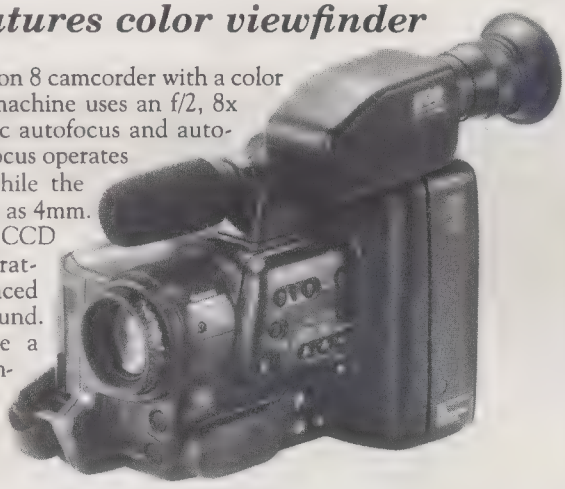
Sharp VHS deck cleans automatically

An automatic head-cleaning system that operates each time a tape is inserted or ejected is one of the highlights of Sharp's VC-H870U hi-fi VHS VCR. A Digital Pulse Added Compensation circuit reduces switching noise. The Onscreen Display Instruction Coach gives step-by-step instructions for six different programming functions. Other features include a double comb filter, blue screen and full automatic playback—just insert a tape and the VCR turns on and goes into play mode.

Price: $499.95.

For additional information, circle No. 159 on Reader Service Card.

Canon 8mm features color viewfinder



The E09 is the first Canovision 8 camcorder with a color LCD viewfinder. The tiny machine uses an f/2, 8x power zoom lens, fuzzy logic autofocus and automatic tracking focus. Autofocus operates from two feet to infinity, while the macro mode focuses as close as 4mm. The half-inch, 270,000-pixel CCD pickup delivers a low-light rating of 2 lux. Audio is enhanced through AFM hi-fi stereo sound. Additional features include a character generator, superimposition and auto fade. A wireless remote is included.

Price: $2,099.

For additional information, circle No. 160 on Reader Service Card.



Philips monitor features surround

Philips' 31-inch monitor/receiver has a 25-watt surround sound system with MTS, along with sound expansion circuitry. The monitor has Philips' color picture-in-picture feature, dubbed "Smart Window." Additional features are personal preference custom tuning memory, channel guide, S-video inputs, audio/video inputs and outputs, an on-screen clock and a universal learning remote.

Price: $1,699.

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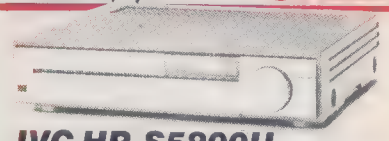
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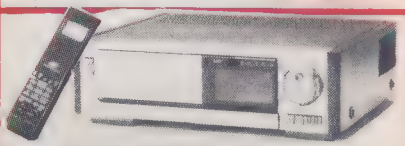
HITACHI VT-F540

VHS: Eight-segment assembler automates editing chores, placing desired scenes in any order. HQ Circuitry and digital auto-tracking ensure quality video and fuss-free playback. CALL



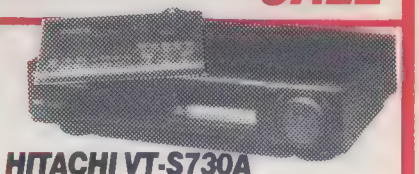
JVC HR-S5800U

S-VHS: Feature-laden deck offers the utmost in scene-finding convenience. Full-featured remote with display duplicates on-screen programming capabilities. CALL



JVC HR-SC1000U

S-VHS: Hi-Fi stereo, VHSC & VHS combo, jog shuttle, digital A/V track with dual screen programming. CALL



HITACHI VT-S730A

S-VHS: Title/date recording adds personal touch. Bargraph-style "tape time remaining" display eliminates recording surprises. Synchro-edit feature simplifies dubbing. CALL



TOSHIBA SV-771

S-VHS: Optical scanner digitizes graphics for superimposition. Other digital tricks include color correction, fades, wipes, negative/positive, titles, and noise reduction. CALL

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EDITED BY APRIL P. BERNARD

COLLECTOR'S CLEARINGHOUSE

Olympics, opera and One, Two, Three

Is there an opera buff who has a copy of the New York City Opera performance of Puccini's *La Rondine*? It was broadcast in October 1985 on PBS. I will gladly reimburse all costs for VHS or Beta.

Mary L. Healey
3710 North Vernon Street
Arlington, VA 22207

ABC broadcast around 53 hours of the 1980 Winter Olympics from Lake Placid, New York, and I am interested in obtaining the complete coverage—as uncut as possible. I already have coverage of the USA hockey games, but would like to own tapes of the other events, as well. I will trade for a good-quality copy, or reimburse all expenses.

Kevin Totten
Box 7558
Cross Lanes, WV 25356

It seems that Judy Garland's appearances on *The Merv Griffin Show* are "over the rainbow," but if any fans have copies, I'll reimburse costs. Or I'll trade Garbo, Monroe or other Garland tapes in VHS.

Robert Wisotsky
1240 East 91 Street
Brooklyn, NY 11236

I am trying to locate two foreign films: *Shock Treatment* with Alain Delon and *Madame Kitty* with Helmut Berger. I will pay reproduction and shipping costs for VHS copies.

Courtland Chiolero
23145 Los Alisos, Apt. 284
Mission Viejo, CA 92691

A couple of years ago, on a New Year's night, I copied *Die Fledermaus* from a PBS broadcast, but unfortunately lost quite a bit of the ending. It features a German cast and is not quite the same as any commercially available tapes or laserdiscs. I would like to hear from anyone who taped this broadcast in Beta or VHS.

Al Quackenbush
1245 Raleigh Road
Glenview, IL 60025

Could some nice, generous person help me? I would sell my soul for NTSC copies of the third and fourth seasons of *Star Trek: The Next Generation*. We're still plodding through the first season over here, and features in genre-zines are driving me bananas! I have a deck that cons my TV into thinking that NTSC equals PAL, but no tapes to play on it. I will reimburse any expenses incurred, and prefer VHS at SP speed.

John Harwood
17 Poulton (New) Road
Layton, Blackpool,
LANCS FY37DS
United Kingdom



Comic Collection: Buster Keaton and Zero Mostel in *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum.*

I have traveled all over the Ozarks and beyond looking for three movies that lead my all-time favorite list. The first is *One, Two, Three*, an early-'60s Jimmy Cagney movie in which he's a cola salesman in Berlin. Second is *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, starring Zero Mostel among other great comics. In third place is *The Horse's Mouth*, starring Sir Alec Guinness as a slightly mad artist who is hung up on feet. If anyone can help me find VHS copies of these classic films, I'll name my first child after him or her. And I'll pay expenses to boot.

Charles Stauffer
HCR 62 Box 77
Clarkridge, AK 72623

Burt Reynolds made his screen debut in *Angel Baby*, which, according to video catalogs, is no longer in print. I am trying to locate a VHS copy.

Dr. Bruce R. Leslie
1514 Jefferson Highway
New Orleans, LA 70121

Here's what I need to fill the gaps in my video collection: the last episode of *The Mary Tyler Moore Show*, where everyone—except Ted—is fired; the October 12, 1990, installment of *American Experience*, a three-hour program on Richard Nixon; an early 1991 episode of *Golden Girls* dealing with the death of Dorothy's brother, Phil; and the episode of *All in the Family*—or was it *Archie's Place?*—after Edith died, and Archie cleaned her things out of their room.

I will reimburse expenses for VHS copies of any or all of these shows.

Don Schwamb
Box 769
Milwaukee, WI 53201

Attention, magic lovers: I am seeking a VHS copy of a Penn and Teller show which aired on NBC the day after Thanksgiving, November 23, 1990. All costs will be reimbursed.

Charles Brauner
1603 Village Square
Danbury, CT 06810

I am an avid collector of country music documentaries and specials, looking for two programs that aired before I purchased a VCR. On February 24, 1983, ABC's *20/20* ran a segment on Hank Williams Jr. called "His Father's Son," and in December 1985, CBS showed a Johnny Cash special with guest stars Jerry Lee Lewis and Roseanne Cash. I will reimburse expenses for a VHS copy.

Ken Campanile
3375 Florence Road
Woodbine, MD 21797

Send those requests for hard-to-find tapes to Collector's Clearinghouse, 460 West 34 Street, New York, NY 10001. Describe exactly what you're looking for, and be sure to include your name and address. Requests for copyrighted material must be for personal use only. You may offer to reimburse expenses, but the Clearinghouse is not open to requests for the purchase or sale of tapes. Video Magazine *does not locate tapes: This is a reader-to-reader service only, so please do not send a self-addressed envelope.*

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BY BRENT BUTTERWORTH

PRIME TIME

We test 6 VCRs and 2 remotes to find the fastest, easiest way to timeshift.

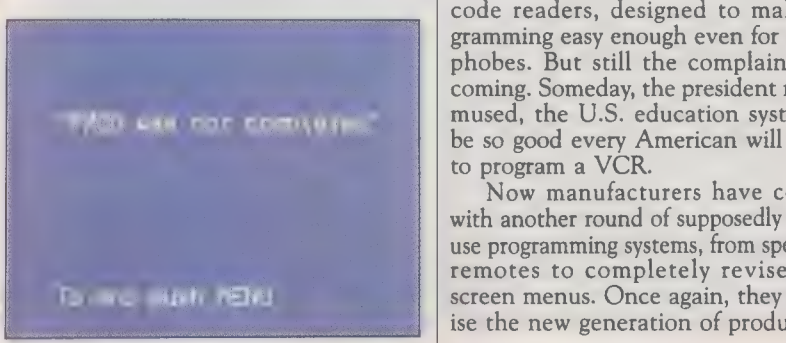
Once the darling of the electronics industry, the VCR has become the brunt of a national joke. From Johnny Carson to George Bush, from *City Slickers* to *Business Week*, Americans constantly scoff at the tiny buttons, flashing displays and confusing owner's manuals that make the machine so hard for many to program. Public perception has it that anyone who can program a VCR must be an engineer or a hopeless techno-geek.

For years, VCR makers have been scrambling to come up with new approaches, like onscreen menus and barcode readers, designed to make programming easy enough even for technophobes. But still the complaints keep coming. Someday, the president recently mused, the U.S. education system will be so good every American will be able to program a VCR.

Now manufacturers have come up with another round of supposedly easy-to-use programming systems, from specialized remotes to completely revised onscreen menus. Once again, they promise the new generation of products will solve the nagging programming problem once and for all. But are the new decks and remotes really easy enough for anyone to use? We decided to find out by conducting a series of timeshifting time trials.

We rounded up six of the latest decks from major manufacturers, along with two remotes—Panasonic's Program Director and Gemstar's VCR Plus—designed just for programming. After connecting the decks to a switcher and monitor, we coaxed four skeptical testers into learning each system, then working with the decks to find out which are almost effortless, and which—if any—are almost hopeless.

As it turned out, confused VCR users may finally have a savior—the dedicated programming remotes proved unbelievably easy to use. And our comparison also showed that those who prefer onscreen programming still have



Guidance System: The Philips VR6065 offers onscreen prompts to guide the user through programming.



VCRs Beat the Clock: From left, Sony's SLV-686, Panasonic's PV-S4167, JVC's HR-S6700, Zenith's VRJ210, Philips' VR6065 and Mitsubishi's HS-U65.

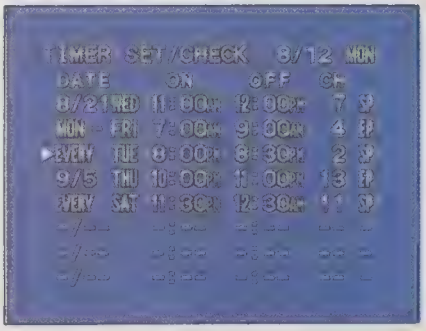
FOR TIMERS

some very attractive options.

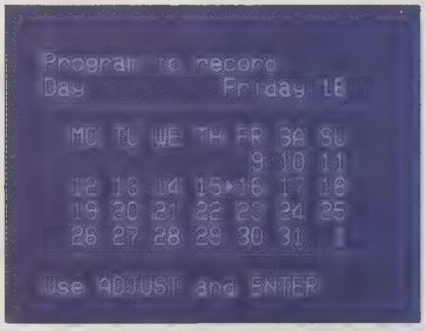
The VCRs we evaluated were JVC's S-VHS HR-S6700U, Mitsubishi's S-VHS HS-U65, Philips' VHS VR6065, Sony's VHS SLV-686 and Zenith's VHS VRJ210. We also included Panasonic's S-VHS PV-S4167, which can be programmed through both onscreen menus and with the Panasonic Program Director. Although the decks range in price from budget to top-of-the-line models, manufacturers typically vary their programming systems only slightly, if at all, throughout their lines of VCRs.

Our panelists varied greatly in experience with VCR programming. They were senior editor Kenneth Korman, assistant editors Brian Clark and April P. Bernard, and art assistant Luis Ramos Jr.

Each panelist conducted the test separately. He or she evaluated each VCR by spending a few minutes getting to know its programming system, then attempting to program it to record a show selected at random from the local listings (all were late-night shows in the middle of the week). Since the panelists might get slightly faster as the testing progressed, we shuffled the order of the decks for each panelist. After completing the comparisons, each panelist conducted a separate test of the VCR Plus (see "Plus or Minus?").



Number Cruncher: Sony's SLV-686 squeezes all information for eight programs onto one screen.



Video FII-O-Fax: With Mitsubishi's HS-U65, dates are programmed through an onscreen calendar.

The time trials revealed significant differences among the VCRs, both in programming speed and ease of use. But the winner wasn't a VCR—it was Panasonic's Program Director remote.

The remote has LCD indicators for date, start time, stop time and channel. Thumbwheels next to the LCDs scroll quickly through the numbers. The programming procedure is simple—turn the remote on, spin the wheels to the correct settings, hit the transmit button to send the program to the VCR, then hit the timer-on button to activate the timer and turn the VCR off. It is included with some of Panasonic's recent VCRs, and may also be purchased separately—it works with any Panasonic VCR that accepts bar-code programming.

The Program Director won the trials easily, with an average programming time of 33 seconds. The panelists all found it very simple to use—"A child could do this," one said. Two panelists especially enjoyed the fact that they didn't have to look back and forth from the remote to the screen when programming, although they were both disappointed that recording speed can't be set from the Program Director. Only one panelist preferred onscreen programming over the Director.

The only onscreen system winning universal acclaim among the panelists was that of the Philips VR6065, even though it ranked a close second in the trials, with an average time of 43.5 seconds. The panelists found its operation, triggered by a menu button and carried out using the numeric keypad, completely intuitive. They enjoyed thoughtful touches like an onscreen "OK" that appears when programming is completed. "Right after you punch in a piece of information, it goes to the next logical step," one panelist commented.

While the panelists were able to program Panasonic's PV-S4167 most quickly

VCRs: BOB FORREST

(average time 40.75 seconds), they didn't care for its system quite as much as the one on the Philips. Two faulted it for an unwieldy control door on the remote that must be held up while programming. It's not surprising that the Philips and Panasonic VCRs ranked so closely, because both are made by Matsushita, and their programming systems are similar, which is also the case with other Matsushita-made brands like Magnavox and Quasar.

JVC's HR-S6700U pleased the panelists and the clock, requiring an average time of 56 seconds. Most found its system, operated with buttons labeled select, set + and set -, not as intuitive as the Matsushita systems, but simple enough once learned. All wished for direct access, or the ability to punch in a time directly without having to scroll through numbers.

The Sony SLV-676 produced the most confusing results. It was the only VCR any panelist needed a manual to program, and three complained that the system was difficult to figure out. Yet it achieved a competitive average time of 58.5 seconds. The system requires the user to press a menu button to start, and execute and cursor buttons to enter data. No onscreen instructions appear to tell the user which buttons to push. The panelists liked the way the Sony system shows all of the programming information on one screen. "It's really very good once you know about the execute button," one commented.

Mitsubishi's HS-U65 VCR achieved an average time of 1:06.5. Its unusual ViewPoint system uses the jog/shuttle dial on the remote to enter data—the shuttle ring moves between start and stop times, date and channel, and the jog dial scrolls through numbers for each type of data. Its most remarkable feature is an onscreen calendar. Indeed, the Mitsubishi was one panelist's favorite. "The calendar is much easier than trying to remember dates," he said. But other panelists had difficulty remembering which dial did what, and didn't like having to cycle through numbers with the jog dial.

JVC manufactures Zenith VCRs, so the systems used on both are similar. But the Zenith system fills the screens with extra information, a trait the panelists

Plus Or Minus?

Gemstar's VCR Plus programming remote is probably the hottest home video product since the VCR itself. Consumers desperate to timeshift but confused by their decks' programming systems have snapped up the remote by the thousands. They've been seduced by the promise that by punching numerical PlusCodes into the VCR Plus, they can program their VCRs in seconds, without having to rely on owner's manuals. Publishers have also been receptive to the remote's charms—*TV Guide* and dozens of local newspapers now publish PlusCodes.

We loved VCR Plus when we first tried it, but in the last few months, we've received a few letters complaining about difficulties in setting up the remote. To find out if its pluses outweigh its minuses, we had each of our panelists set up the VCR Plus, then program with it.

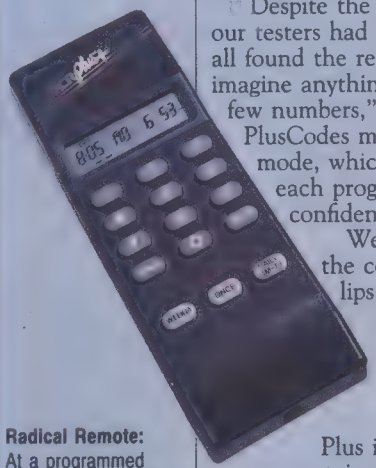
The basic procedure involves setting the remote's internal clock, then selecting the control code set that works for your VCR (codes for all major VCR brands are included with the remote). But for some cable subscribers, the job can be tougher.

Many large cities are served by multiple cable systems with varying channel assignments—CNN might be on Channel 23 in the center of town, Channel 19 in the suburbs. Often, newspapers publish cable listings based on inner-city systems, and provide a channel equivalency chart for readers in other areas. VCR Plus users can get around this problem by reprogramming the remote's channel assignments, so that a PlusCode specifying Channel 23 would actually record Channel 19. This task is accomplished in much the same way as the other set-up tasks, through a set of buttons under a flap at the front of the remote.

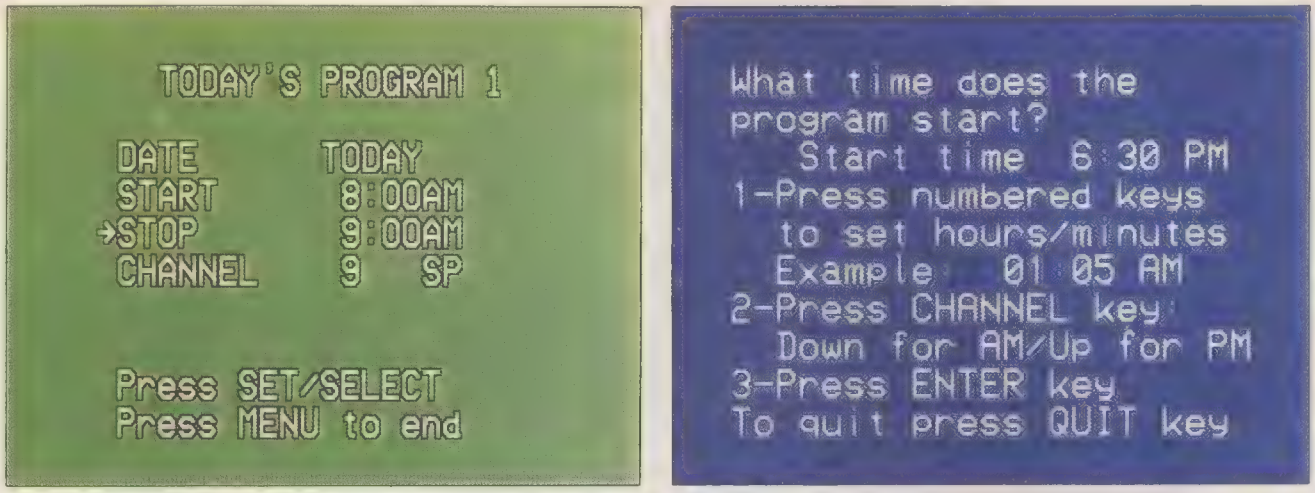
Despite the complaints we've been hearing, none of our testers had difficulty setting up the VCR Plus. And all found the remote very easy to program with. "I can't imagine anything could be simpler than punching in a few numbers," one said. Some expressed fears that PlusCodes might be incorrect, but the remote's review mode, which shows the channel, date and time of each program to be recorded, made them more confident.

We encountered one problem when setting the command codes—the code listed for Philips VCRs wouldn't work for Philips' VR6065. Gemstar says it will send a remote with the new Philips codes to any customer who encounters this problem.

The panelists' reservation about VCR Plus is that most listings only carry codes for certain programs. For example, *The New York Times* daily listings carry codes for all programs, but the weekly listings carry codes for only selected programs. "You'll still end up having to program your VCR occasionally, because sometimes you won't have the code you need," one panelist noted. **—BB**



Radical Remote: At a programmed time, Gemstar's VCR Plus automatically turns on a VCR, selects the correct channel and starts recording.



Timeshifting Tricks: JVC accents its menu system with different screen colors (left), while Zenith provides extensive onscreen instructions (right).

found annoying and cumbersome. The task of reading the onscreen text slowed the average time to 1:14. "There's too much text onscreen," said one panelist. "You read forever and keep wondering if you should move on or if you still have something left to do on that screen."

PICKING A PROGRAMMER

Although we may not have tested the VCR brand you're considering, it's possible to draw conclusions about any onscreen system using our test results. Most stores don't have every VCR on display hooked up, but you should at least be able to find one model of the brand you're considering to try out.

Look for the same qualities our testers liked. For example, their favorite decks, the Philips and the Panasonic, allow direct entry of programming data through the remotes' 10-digit keypads without requiring the user to scroll through numbers. A good programming system should, like the one by Philips, offer a few gentle reminders to tell the user if he or she has made a mistake.

However, the system shouldn't go overboard on onscreen text, because too many messages are slow to read and can be confusing. Ideally, the system should go right to the next step after the user enters information, not wait for the user to push a button to get to the next screen.

After the formal evaluation, we tried evaluating an RCA model, the VHS VR685HF, using these criteria, and quickly realized our panelists would have liked RCA's programming system. It is amazingly similar to that used for the Philips deck, down to the onscreen calendar (which is only for reference, not for actual programming).

Both allow direct entry of data, and both immediately ask for the next item of information when an entry is made. In addition, the RCA has an onscreen instruction manual that lists the steps required for programming. Hitachi makes RCA VCRs, so it's no surprise that Hitachi decks carry a similar programming system.



Spinnin' Wheels: Panasonic's easy-to-use Program Director remote.

VCR makers have finally solved the problem of timeshifting.

If your local newspaper carries VCR Plus codes for most programs, VCR Plus might be for you. It's also ideal for *TV Guide* subscribers, because the magazine publishes codes for all programs. By late September, all editions of *TV Guide* will carry the codes. Our panelists felt that once the remote was properly set up, anyone should be able to use it easily. We recommend reading the owner's manual thoroughly, and keeping it by your side as you set the remote up. The manual contains a clear, step-by-step explanation of the entire setup procedure.

Gemstar also offers a toll-free number for technical assistance, which, unlike many free help lines, is well-staffed. You don't have to wait half an hour for help—when we had problems programming the remote to work with the Philips VCR, it only took us about 30 seconds to get through to a technician in the middle of the day. We're confident its staff can help you through any problems you might encounter with VCR Plus.

Operating VCR Plus may become even simpler when, later this year, RCA introduces VCRs with built-in VCR Plus circuitry. This way, the user won't have to program VCR command codes into the remote. Zenith plans to follow suit next year, and other VCR makers have expressed interest.

Those who have suitable Panasonic VCRs might prefer to use the Program Director, which is just about as simple to use, if not as fast. Sony fans can get the same result with the S-VHS SLV-R5. Its remote has a built-in programmer that works almost exactly like the Program Director. And if the Program Director proves as popular as we expect, other manufacturers should soon offer similar remotes.

After trying the best programming systems video has to offer, we're impressed. We think video manufacturers have finally solved the problem of timeshifting. Now anyone who can spend about $60 for a VCR Plus or a Panasonic Program Director can program a VCR. The promise of the VCR has finally been fully realized—we'll never have to stay up late to watch *The David Letterman Show* again. ■

SCREEN SHOTS: MITSUBISHI CP10U VIDEO PRINTER; VCR PLUS/PROGRAM DIRECTOR: BOB FORREST

BY MAREK GAJEWSKI



ON A WING AND A THUMB

Pluck, luck and an 8mm camcorder help a video adventurer fulfill a dream.





Footloose:
Marek Gajewski checks out his camcorder (right) and videotapes a fellow hang-gliding student (above) on the dunes near Kitty Hawk.

I was the first in the group to fly. With the handbar of a hang glider pressed against my belly and facing the foot of a sand dune, feeling the wind in my sail, I heard the instructor's command: "Run!" Using all the power my legs could deliver, I raced downhill. At the second command—"Flare!"—I pushed the bar forward. Suddenly, I was airborne. "I'm flying, I am Icarus," I felt myself shout.

Flowing beneath my soaring body, I saw yellow dunes—and a terrified instructor. "Pull in," he screamed. Dizzy from this thrilling new sensation, I pushed out instead. Almost instantly, the glider dipped sharply and crashed. The impact bent the metal handbar, and left me with bruises the size and color of small fruits.

"Are you okay?" friends shouted as they ran to help.

"Did you manage to tape my flight?" I replied. "If not, I'll do it again."

This occurred in Kitty Hawk, North Carolina, on the famous sand dunes where the Wright brothers flew their first experimental glider flights. Now, I had flown solo for the first (and last) time on this trip, although in the coming weeks I would share flights with dozens of pilots on a remarkable variety of aircraft. My journey had begun only a few days before, when I caught the first ride in my attempt to hitchhike across the country by air and videotape the experi-

ILLUSTRATION: BILL GIBBONS



ence, diary style, as it unfolded.

The dream of such a journey came to me 18 years ago when, still a student in Warsaw, Poland, I visited the U.S. for the first time to meet my American relatives. During the year-long visit, I traveled as much as I could, usually by hitchhiking. It was an experience I never forgot, largely because of the wonderful people I met along the way.

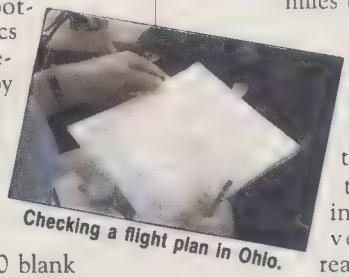
I wanted to relive that experience, but with two crucial differences. I was determined to hitchhike across the U.S. by air—skyhiking as I called it—and to document my travels with a camcorder. One other goal was to arrive in Oshkosh, Wisconsin, at the end of July, in time for the annual Experimental Aircraft Association Convention and Sport Aviation Exhibition, better known as the Oshkosh Fly-In, when tiny Oshkosh briefly hosts the largest collection of airplanes in the world.



Stunt pilots at the Oshkosh Fly-In.

I was certain it would be a great adventure, but a difficult one. As video's version of a one-man band, I had to do stand-ups in front of the camera, conduct interviews, take care of audio and lighting tasks, and keep my gear in running order. For a camcorder, I chose Sony's CCD-V101. Its superb Hi8 image quality and light, four-pound weight made the difference. The weight was crucial. I missed one ride in Columbus, Ohio, because my video bag, which weighed 30 pounds, was "a little too heavy" for the airplane. I had to wait nearly two days for my next lift.

The rest of that 30-pound bag was filled with necessities. For audio, I carried wireless handheld and lapel microphones by Azden, as well as a shotgun mic and Azden's headset with a boom mic for monitoring sound and adding narration while shooting. Jammed beside the mics were wide-angle and telephoto conversion lenses by VdoPak, a small Casio LCD TV set to check my recordings, an Ambico video light with its own batteries, two spare camcorder batteries, three chargers, skylight filters, 10 blank Hi8 cassettes (which filled all too soon) and a Velbon tripod.



Checking a flight plan in Ohio.

I set out on July 4, a day that promised good luck, from Skyhaven, a small general aviation airport near Rochester, New Hampshire. I was certain a month would be time enough to reach Oshkosh for the Fly-In. But then hitchhiking by car, where I rarely waited longer than 20 minutes for a ride, had never prepared me for the reality of skyhiking.

My first taste of this new reality was immediate. On July 4, no planes departed Skyhaven. My pictures of fireworks that evening were taken from the ground, not the clouds. The next day, a weather front was passing through, and I learned the importance of hanging around an airport and getting to know the regulars.

On the third day, I was offered a lift aboard a Beechcraft Kingair, a twin-engine turboprop, with a lavishly appointed cabin suitable for the president of the development company that owned the plane. We left so quickly, for a business meeting in Kingston, New York, 250 miles to the west, that I had no time to shoot myself boarding the plane. But once aloft, in the brilliant morning sun, I could shoot the shining runways of the Peas Air Force Base in Portsmouth, the silver-blue Great Bay, reaching almost to Dover, and the beautiful green campus of the University of New Hampshire in Durham.

At last, I was on my way.

From Kingston, I cadged a flight to Mount Pocono in Pennsylvania, then a short hitch by car to the Wilkes-Barre Airport, where I spent my first night in a

OSHKOSH, OHIO PHOTOS: MAREK GAJEWSKI/MITSUBISHI CP10U VIDEO PRINTER

ON A WING



very hospitable FBO called Millionaire. An FBO, or fixed base operation, is a company that provides services to pilots, passengers and planes. There's usually at least one at every airport.

In the Millionaire's pilot lounge, I had an opportunity to check audio levels. Airports and airplanes, especially cockpits, are extremely noisy, and I was worried voices would be drowned out by loud background sounds. How noisy are planes? Later in the trip, Vernon Dahlman, a fine show pilot, suggested we go for a short spin. Once in the air, he suggested some aerobatics. Immediately, he flipped the plane upside down. I started to scream, and kept screaming as we went from one roller-coaster maneuver to another. Later, when I watched the tape of myself screaming away while the cockpit rotated, I could hardly hear myself above the engine noise.

Surprisingly, the built-in Sony mic seemed to do the best job. The shotgun mic picked up additional noises and the handheld mic proved awkward for my style of shooting. However, I used the lapel mic a lot with good results. Later, at Oshkosh, I learned about the flight intercom made by the Flightcom Corp. in Portland, Oregon. This is a voice-activated intercom and headset that makes it possible to monitor and record cockpit chatter, both among pilots and with control towers. It's invaluable for aviation videos. Lacking the Flightcom set for most of my trip, I tended to interview pilots when they were on the ground or with the engine turned off, adding them or their comments to the visuals as the story required.

SOUTHERN DETOUR

From Wilkes-Barre, I made my way to Raleigh, North Carolina, where the air was so hot and thick, I felt like I could cut it with a knife. By now, I was getting a feel for FBOs. As soon as I landed, I would introduce myself to the FBO manager and ask permission to use

Marek Gajewski is a Polish journalist, based in Warsaw.

'Immediately, he flipped the plane

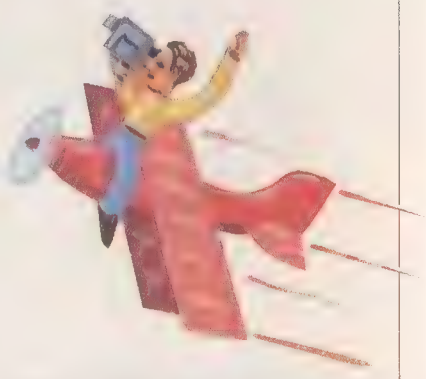


upside down. I started to scream & kept screaming as we went from one roller-coaster move to another.'

the FBO for skyhiking. Usually, the answer was yes. The FBO's permission was essential because, with fear of hijacking so widespread, I needed time to meet pilots and let them get to know me a little.

At Raleigh, I shuttled between two FBO dispatchers who were working to get me moving again. At 2 a.m., the tour plane for the Grateful Dead touched down, but the tour chief gave my pitch a firm no. It was just as well. Later that day, I met a pilot who shuttled me to Dare County Regional Airport, and then another with Kitty Hawk Air Tours who let me skyhike a ride to aviation's birthplace, the historic First Flight Airport at Kitty Hawk, where the Wright brothers first propelled themselves into the sky. Now, young Air Tour pilots were flying passengers around the memorial in bright blue-and-yellow Cessna 172s.

Kitty Hawk is also home to Kitty Hawk Kites, the world's largest hang-gliding school. There I met its founder, John Harris, who proposed strapping me into a glider for a lesson, and Francis Regallo, known as the father of hang gliding for his invention of the flexible wing. The lesson proved to be a disaster, but the experience ended happily as I finally soared in tandem—camcorder clutched to my chest—with Greg Ball, my instructor, who was actually piloting the glider.



With the Fly-In growing ever nearer, I hit the road again, going first to Maryland, then Atlantic City, then to security-conscious National Airport in Washington, D.C., despite warnings that I would never be able to hitch my way out. The warnings proved accurate. After two days and dozens of rejections, the best I could do was a flight—the shortest of my trip—to nearby Dulles Airport. Here, despite equally heavy security, I was luckier. A pilot instructor let me skyhike on a short jump to West Virginia. Then it was across the Appalachians to Latrobe, a small, pretty airport near Pittsburgh.

At Latrobe, I naively accepted a ride that too easily could have led to disaster. Two young pilots, Dave and John, who had stopped to refuel their two Cessna 152s, offered to carry me on to Columbus, Ohio. With darkness approaching and no place to stay, I accepted my first night flight. Off we flew, myself with John, my bags with Dave—the tiny planes had strict weight limits. The sky was clear as we passed low over dwellings that glowed like jewels beneath the full moon.

"What's that town beneath us?" I asked.

"Don't know," said John. "I'm just following Dave." And here he pointed to a dim twinkle barely visible in the encompassing darkness.

"Maybe Dave knows the town. Could you call him over the radio?"

"Sorry," answered John. "Radio's broken."

Fortunately, the weather stayed calm and my nerve-wracking, rule-bending flight touched down safely.

ON TO OSHKOSH

With only a few days left before the Fly-In, my route from Columbus meandered through Cleveland, Ohio State University, Midway Airport near Chicago, back to Midway (thanks to a propeller malfunction), Milwaukee and, at last, Oshkosh—on a bright sunny morning, the field already abuzz with aircraft and crowds.

Normally a city of 50,000, Oshkosh triples in size during the Fly-In, packed with 15,000 planes and nearly a million visitors. It is a unique experience, in part for the tremendous spirit of volunteerism that seems to be everywhere, from aerobatic pilots who perform for free to many of the technicians who keep the equipment working smoothly.

Roaming the grounds, I shot cassette after cassette. Among my subjects were Lee Abbot, a Texas barnstormer in the '20s, now 83, but still dressed to the nines in long boots and a silk scarf, regaling small crowds with tales of the early days; Bob Lyjak, a top aerobatics pilot (and mathematics professor) who's survived more than one brush with death; and one pilot who didn't. Flying too low, he crashed before thousands of horrified spectators on the show's final day.

Getting out of Oshkosh proved a lot easier than getting in. Packed and ready to move on, I was able to have my request for a ride broadcast from the main control tower. Within minutes, Vernon Dalhman appeared to offer me a lift to Sacramento, California, more than 1,000 miles away, where I stayed briefly as his guest. Leaving Dalhman, I languished for more than three days at the Palo Alto Airport before finding a ride down the coast to Van Nuys. Lulled by the California sun, I decided I needed a break from the rigors of skyhiking.

One afternoon, on the pier in Santa Monica, I heard two people speaking Polish. I turned around. One was a dear friend, Anna Slawkowska-Rode, who lived a block away from me in Poland. A teacher at the Academy of Fine Arts in Warsaw, she was spending the summer in Los Angeles with her husband and son. Amazed at this unexpected reunion, we spent the next few days talking and sightseeing.

Finally, it was time to return—to New York, then to Poland. I skyhiked north, guest of a family of four on their private plane, as far as the Oakland Airport, where I hit the wall. No luck. I shuttled to nearby San Francisco International Airport. Still no luck. Back I went to Oakland.

But even grounded, my camcorder found much to record. The airports were humming with traffic: Two uniformed messengers rushed by carrying a Styrofoam box labeled "Human Eyes." The late Malcolm Forbes' plane, now owned by his son, rolled up to one gate. A private DC7 belonging to an owner of the Seattle Blue Hawks rolled up to another. One morning, a uniformed servant appeared with a red carpet that he rolled out for a pretty young lady, age about five, who walked down the carpet into a waiting Rolls-Royce. A white-gloved chauffeur closed the door and drove them away.

Five days without a flight. My longest layover.

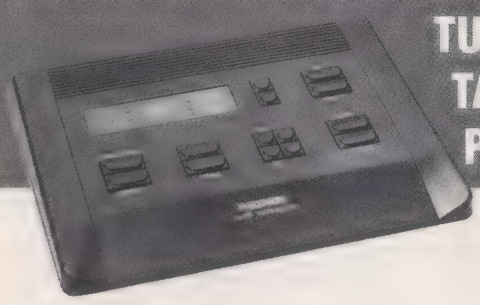
Eventually, I landed a ride with International Flight, a company that transports checks. I boarded the company's Cessna Citation, a small, elegant corporate jet, along with millions of dollars in checks. Within eight hours—after stopovers in Denver, Chicago and Cleveland—I landed in Teterboro, New Jersey, on the outskirts of New York City.

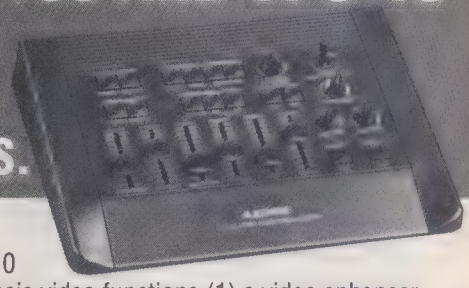
My American skyhike was over. It had lasted two months and left me with unforgettable memories—preserved on more than 40 hours of video—of a country I had longed to experience in all its warmth, beauty and infinite variety. ■

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BY BRENT BUTTERWORTH
AND HOWARD MILLMAN

PC Video Update

BIG BLUE MEETS THE VCR

New hardware and software products turn IBM PCs into home video editing workstations.



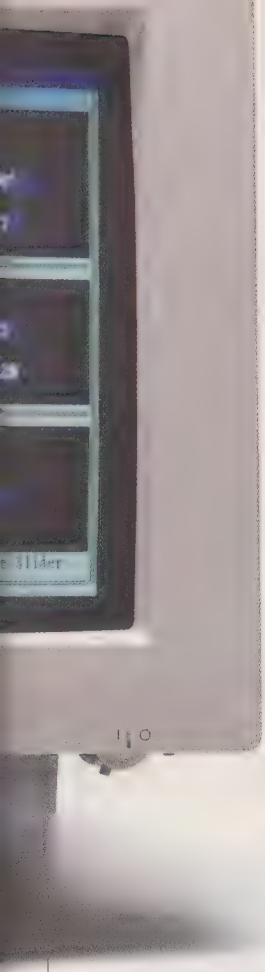
The introduction of the Video Toaster early this year turned the long-awaited marriage of video and computers into a shotgun wedding. The success of the Toaster—a $1,600 multipurpose computer video board—catapulted the once-esoteric realm of computer-aided "desktop" video production into the mainstream. From amateurs to professionals, nearly every serious videographer now wants to add a computer to his or her editing setup. Computer-generated titles and graphics are no longer just snazzy gimmicks—they've become elements expected of all but the most casual productions.

Buying a Toaster might seem a simple solution, but it only works with Commodore's Amiga, a computer loved by hobbyists but almost unknown to mainstream users. Most videographers would prefer to use the computer they already own—usually an IBM PC—for video work, instead of spending more than $4,000 for an Amiga/Toaster setup.

While Big Blue itself has been slow to get into the field, a host of third-party hardware and software developers have made PC desktop video a reality. In this article, we'll discuss the PC peripherals and programs videographers need, and what those products will do for videos.

Macintosh users can find similar products, but generally at much higher prices. The component most often used in Macintosh desktop video, Truevision's NuVista videographics board, costs about $3,000. However, Apple's interest in video is growing, so we expect to see more affordable Mac video products in the near future.

The first problem videographers confront when using IBM PCs is compatibility. With Amigas, hardware and software installation is virtually a plug-in-and-play operation. But working with video on PCs requires some familiarity with the many operating systems and graphics standards PCs use. Hardware and software are usually compatible with only certain versions of an operating system and with only a couple of graphics standards. For example, to create some of the accompanying graphics, we had to cannibalize three of our office PCs, and wade through several hours of trial and error. It's a lot easier if you start with plenty of computing power (for recommendations, see "How Much PC Power Do You Need For Video?").



Getting in Sync: Video Associates' MicroKey/Genlock syncs computer video to NTSC video, so graphics can be superimposed over video images.



Freeze Frame: Digital Vision's ComputerEyes RT video digitizer grabs frames from video.

BIG BLUE BASICS

Desktop video involves three basic operations:

- *Digitizing* is the act of bringing a video image into a computer, so it can be altered and combined with other graphic elements.
- *Graphics creation* is desktop video's main reason for being. Graphics can take the form of digitized images, drawings and animations created with a paint program, and text, which can be generated using a paint program or titling software.
- *Encoding and genlocking* are the methods used to get computer images onto videotape. An encoder simply converts computer video to NTSC standards, so it can be recorded on a VCR. A genlock (which usually incorporates an encoder) discards the background color in the graphics and substitutes an incoming video signal, so that the computer's graphics are superimposed on the video.

These three elements give videographers limitless creative potential. Computer graphics and titles can be used anywhere, but experienced editors tend to use them at the beginning and end of a video, and to introduce new scenes.

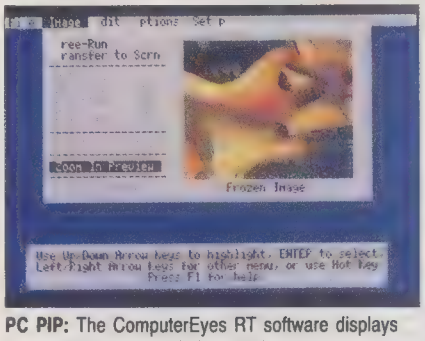
For example, a Hawaiian vacation video might open with animated coconuts falling from a swaying palm tree, each coconut cracking open to reveal the name of a person in the video. Side trips could be introduced with a digitized map of the area, and an animated airplane traveling from island to island. People and places would be tagged with simple text titles, and the video could end with scrolling credits over a collage of digitized images from the video.

While desktop video requires some sense of design, it doesn't demand drawing talent. Paint programs use a variety of mouse-driven drawing tools that let anyone create attractive graphics, and anything you can't draw can simply be digitized. With practice, you should be able to produce simple titles, graphics and animations in minutes. On the other hand, creating a sophisticated graphic can take hours, and pursuing an ambitious animation idea can take days. This may sound like a lot of work, but many desktop video producers find it fun, even addictive.

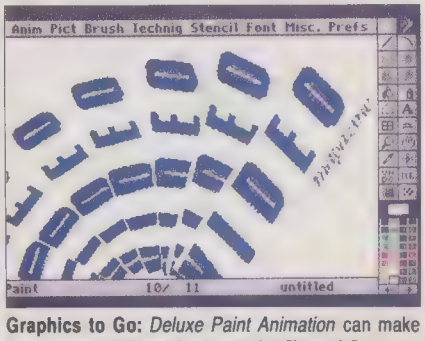
The main modification you'll have to make to your PC is the addition of an



Lost in Space: Graphic incorporating digitized images manipulated with *Deluxe Paint Animation*.



PC PIP: The ComputerEyes RT software displays incoming video in a window on the computer screen.



Graphics to Go: *Deluxe Paint Animation* can make original and digitized images spin, flip and fly.

SCREEN SHOTS: TRUEVISION VIDEOVGA/MITSUBISHI CP10U VIDEO PRINTER

BIG BLUE

With a digitizer, you can create professional-quality graphics.

PC Video Shopper's Guide

The products needed for PC desktop video can be tough to find, and information about them elusive. Below is the basic info you need to judge whether the products featured in the accompanying article will work with *your* computer system. Except for ComputerEyes RT and Video Charley, all the hardware below requires full-size expansion slots—sorry, most laptops won't work for video.

HARDWARE

- *Targa+ 16 videographics board.* Digitizes video images, keys computer graphics over or under video, provides NTSC output. Works in any PC with at least 640 kilobytes of random-access memory (RAM) and DOS 3.1 or higher. Truevision, 7340 Shadeland Station, Indianapolis, IN 46256; 317-841-0332.
- *VideoVGA genlock/encoder.* Superimposes computer graphics over video, provides NTSC output. Works in any PC with at least 640K RAM and DOS 3.1 or higher. Truevision.
- *ComputerEyes RT video digitizer.* Digitizes images from video. Works in any PC with at least 640K RAM, DOS 2.1 or higher, and a VGA, Super VGA or MCGA graphics adapter. Digital Vision, 270 Bridge Street, Dedham, MA 02026; 617-329-5400.
- *MicroKey/A encoder/audio digitizer.* Digitizes and plays back audio, synchronizes audio to graphics, provides NTSC output. Genlock and digitizer modules available. Works in any 286, 386 or 486 PC with a hard drive, DOS 3.1 or higher and at least 640K RAM. Video Associates, 4926 Spicewood Springs Road, Austin, TX 78759; 512-346-5781.
- *TVGA encoder.* Provides NTSC output; genlock and digitizer modules available. US Video, One Stamford Landing, 62 Southfield Avenue, Stamford, CT 06902; 203-964-9000.
- *Video Charley genlock.* Superimposes computer graphics over video, provides NTSC output. Works in any PC equipped with an EGA graphics adapter. Progressive Image Technology, 120 Blue Ravine Road, Suite 2, Folsom, CA 95630; 916-985-7501.

SOFTWARE

- *Animator.* Creates and animates images and text. Runs on any 286, 386, 486 or PS/2 PC with DOS 2.0 or higher, at least 640K RAM, a hard drive and a VGA graphics adapter. Autodesk, 2320 Marinship Way, Sausalito, CA 94965; 415-332-2344.
- *Deluxe Paint Animation.* Creates and animates images and text. Runs on any PC with 640K RAM, a hard drive, DOS 2.1 or higher and an MCGA or VGA graphics adapter. Electronic Arts, 1820 Gateway Drive, San Mateo, CA 94404; 415-571-7171.
- *Animation Works Interactive.* Creates and animates images and text; combines animations and synchronizes them with sound and video. Runs on any 286, 386, 486

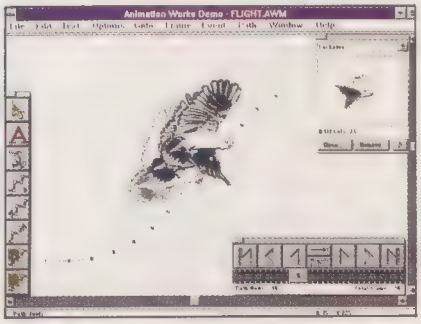
continued on page 86



Affordable Animation: Electronic Arts' $135 *Deluxe Paint Animation.*

NTSC encoder or genlock. These come in the form of circuit boards that take the place of a PC's existing graphics adapter. Each has an output for a color computer monitor, as well as standard NTSC video jacks. The granddaddy of these boards is Truevision's Targa, which has become the standard among pros using PCs.

Truevision has produced many versions of the Targa, the latest of which is the $1,795 Targa+ 16, an all-purpose board that includes a genlock, a digitizer and a chroma keyer. The chroma keyer places computer graphics *under* video subjects, who stand in front of a blue



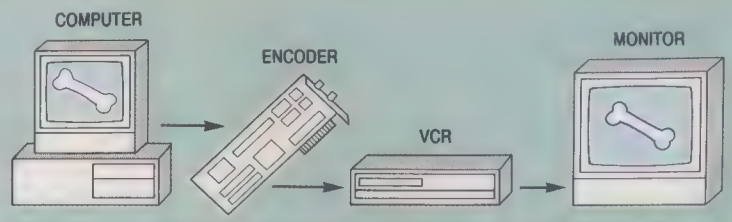
Let It Fly: Gold Disk's *Animation Works Interactive* produces complex animations easily.

backdrop during shooting. You see this effect every time you watch a TV weatherman standing in front of a computer-generated map. Most important, Targas produce much more realistic images than most PC video boards. The Targa+ 16 can produce 32,756 colors, compared to 256 for most VGA-type boards. The 16.7-million-color Targa 16/32 is available for only $200 more.

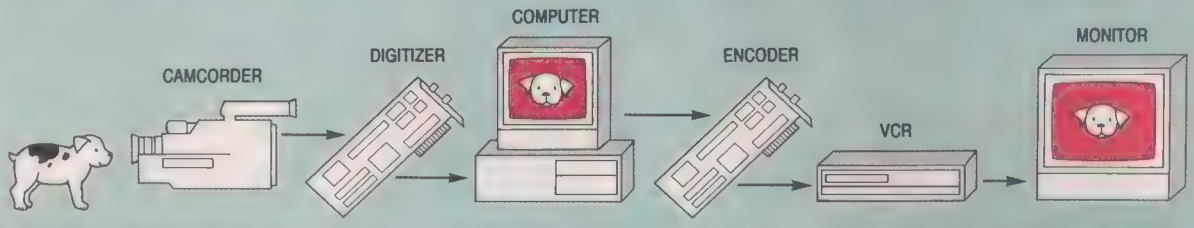
A less expensive alternative is Truevision's $995 VideoVGA, a high-quality genlock which, like the Targa+ 16, offers composite and S-video inputs and outputs. Like a conventional VGA, the VideoVGA produces 256 colors with resolution up to 1,024 x 768 pixels. The computer graphics overlay can be switched in and out from the keyboard.

The VideoVGA comes with versatile titling software that generates smooth, professional-looking text. It offers one sans-serif typestyle in 15 sizes, and 17 more typestyles—all designed specifically for NTSC video—can be added for $175. Text can be scrolled and

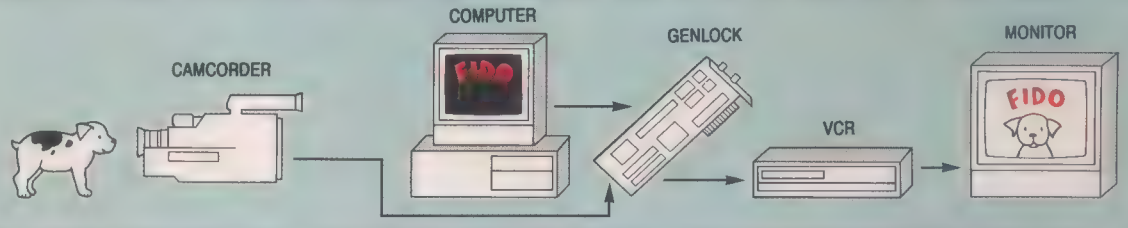
Connecting A PC For Desktop Video



Basic System: Simple desktop video systems use an NTSC encoder to record graphics and animations from paint and titling programs on videotape.



Camcorder Computing: A digitizer lets users create complex graphics by capturing still images from video and altering them with a paint program.



Mixing Board: A complete desktop video system includes a genlock, which combines computer graphics and animations with moving video images.

dissolved in 14 ways, and title pages may be combined into sequences.

A cheaper, but more limited route to desktop video is to use a simple encoder. This saves a few hundred dollars, but will only allow you to record straight computer graphics or straight video—you won't be able to combine the two. However, with US Video's $779 TVGA, this isn't a problem because the board is modular, which allows the system to be expanded later. The main board delivers 256 colors in resolution up to 800 x 600 pixels. An optional $339 genlock and $449 digitizer snap on to the TVGA.

Unlike the Targa+ 16, the TVGA digitizer has no frame store, so it can't digitize a frame from moving video. This is no problem if you're digitizing a static image from a video camera. Digitizing an image from videotape requires pausing the source VCR, resulting in a digitized image that is only as clean as the still frame your deck produces.

For the casual videographer seeking low-cost titling, Progressive Image Technology's Video Charley may be the only choice. At $550 for a genlock and titling software, it's the bargain basement of PC desktop video. The Video Charley works in conjunction with EGA video boards (about $100), which provide only 16 colors (from a palette of 64) and 640 x 350-pixel resolution. It also works with any EGA-compatible paint program.

While it only takes a genlock, a good paint program and a lot of imagination to lift home videos to new creative levels, a digitizer can help you create graphics that look almost as good as those produced by local TV stations. A digitizer lets you use a video camera to capture logos, which can then be animated in title sequences like the ones that begin TV news programs.

Using a digitizer, you can make short cartoons (similar to the ones Terry Gilliam created for *Monty Python's Flying Circus*) by digitizing photos or drawings and animating them. If something's too hard to draw, you can digitize it from a photo and add it to your graphics, or create your own drawing of it by tracing around the digitized image. You can even paint beards, silly hats and any

continued on page 82

KRISTINA JUZAITIS

How Much PC Power Do You Need For Video?

Most IBM PCs are used to run word processors, spreadsheets and databases—applications that seldom require the horsepower desktop video demands. So chances are you'll have to upgrade your existing PC for video.

While XTs (or 8088s) can work for video, they're very slow, often requiring several minutes to perform time-consuming operations like animation rendering. An AT (or 286) works fast enough for desktop video, and of course, a 386 or 486 is even better. PS/2s can also do the job—most hardware companies make microchannel versions of their boards that fit the new-generation IBMs.

Most paint programs require use of a hard drive, and all require a mouse. It's possible, but not desirable, to use only an NTSC monitor—computer monitors offer better resolution without the flicker caused by NTSC interlacing. Encoders and genlocks generally demand use of a VGA or multisync monitor.

For simple graphics, you only need 640 kilobytes of random-access memory (RAM), which most PCs already have. Complex animations usually require two to four megabytes of RAM. You'll probably need DOS version 3.1 or higher, and some recent programs only work when used with Microsoft *Windows*. —**BB**

BY FRANK BEACHAM

VIDEOTAPE'S WONDER YEARS

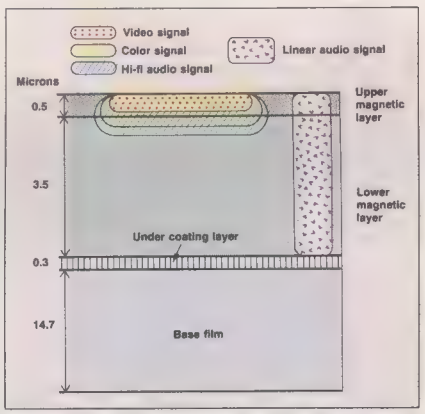
How long will tapes last? New research offers an answer.



It's one of the touchiest questions in video and few consumers bother to ask it: How long does a videocassette last? Most of us operate on the assumption the tapes we record today will play back far into the future. But how long can we expect that tape to reliably store and recall our memories?

The answer is not found in advertisements for videotape. But the truth is, unfortunately, that videotape is not forever. Unlike movie film—which can last for decades—videotape is more fragile. In fact, no magnetic recording medium is permanent. Those ribbons of cobalt ferric oxide or the metallic particles inside the plastic shell of a videocassette represent very new technology. Even professionals have had only 20 years of experience with traditional oxide tapes. The newer metal tape, introduced with the 8mm format in 1985, is an infant.

So, how long does a videocassette last? Traditionally, tape manufacturers have waffled on the question. Consumers have been offered some general storage tips and assurances that it's not a matter for serious concern. But now, thanks to a new internal study by Sony in Japan ("Archived Stability of Metal Video Tapes," Magnetic Products Group Technical Report, Vol. 6), a tape manufacturer has gone on the record with a specific estimate of the life expectancy of videotape products that should shatter illusions that videotape lasts forever.



Layered Look: Cross-section of a Fuji videotape shows how audio and video signals are protectively embedded in magnetic layers above the base film.

Sony's research, which applies to both consumer and professional grades of videotape, was conducted in Japan with the company's broadcast-oriented Betacam system, the only video recording format that can use either oxide or metal tapes. One purpose of the study, Sony noted, was to compare the archival stability of the newer metal tape against traditional oxide formulations. "Some people in charge of tape libraries are seriously concerned about the archival stability of metal videotapes, because essentially, metal materials have problems with chemical instability and corrosion," write Sony's authors.

The newer metal tape, which has a protective outer surface that wraps around and protects the metal particles, offers performance improvements over oxide tape in three areas: magnetic energy, spacing loss and modulation noise. Metal tape has four times more magnetic energy than oxide tape. Metal tape's mirror-finished surface also reduces spacing loss (the gap between the head and the tape), producing higher output from high frequencies. And metal tape has a higher carrier-to-noise ratio (C/



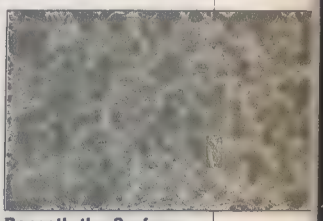
N). This is the ratio between the output level and the noise level with which a frequency is recorded and played back. A higher C/N usually means less noise and a better picture.

The durability of both the new high-performance metal tape and traditional oxide tape was tested extensively by Sony in sealed chambers at varying temperature and humidity levels. The researchers wanted to find out how environmental conditions affect oxidation, magnetic properties, RF output, video signal-to-noise ratios and dropout levels.

In order to see how wear and tear affects the RF output of tape, Sony ran half-inch cassettes through 500 playback and rewind cycles at ¤ slow 1/30 speed on a Betacam VCR.

The result, according to the Sony study, is that both metal and oxide tape, when stored at 77 degrees Fahrenheit and 50 percent relative humidity, "are very stable and have no change in video electromagnetic performance." Even after 16 weeks of extreme stress—113 degrees and 80 percent relative humidity—the degradation of video electromagnetic performance was less than 0.6 decibels. "This value would not affect the picture quality during playback," says the report. However, at this high temperature level, the dropout level quickly doubled during the 16-week period.

Under the rewind durability tests, Sony found metal tape to have less RF output degradation than oxide tape. After 500 cycles, oxide tape deteriorated by 2.3 dB, metal tape by 0.6 dB. Sony notes this was no surprise since the materials in metal tape are superior to oxide when it comes to withstanding thermal and mechanical stress.

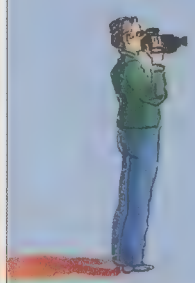


Beneath the Surface: Electron microscope shows the arrangement of magnetic particles, only 0.3 microns long, on the base film of a Sony videotape.

The Sony report concludes that the life expectancy of any tape—metal or oxide—depends on the decomposition rate of its chemical components: the plastic base film, polymer binders, back-coating materials, lubricants and dispersing agents. Heat and moisture accelerate the degradation of these organic materials in both oxide and metal tape formulations, according to the report.

So what's the bottom line? How long does Sony say we can expect a videocassette to last? Since environmental conditions are the key to the tape's

How To Keep Your Videotapes Healthy



Videotapes live longer when they're treated properly. Fortunately, most of the things that help videotapes last are within your control. Here's what Sony's technical report recommends:

- For long-term storage, keep tapes in an environment with a temperature between 59 and 77 degrees Fahrenheit and 40 to 60 percent relative humidity. The conditions should be as constant as possible, and free of dust and pollutants.
- Wind the tape properly and fully on either reel. Unevenly wound tape with slipped sections stretches over time, causing playback disturbances.
- Store tapes upright in their cases.
- Fast-forward and rewind tapes at least once every three years to keep them ventilated.
- Keep tapes away from magnetic fields, including those from speakers, motors and voltage transformers. The magnetism can cause tape noise or partial erasure.
- Properly maintain your video recorder. Since videotape uses a thin plastic base film, it can wrinkle and scratch if played on a VCR with a faulty tape transport or tape path. During routine maintenance always check the rubber on the pinch roller that grips and pulls the tape, and replace it at regular intervals. —FB

ILLUSTRATION: ANDREA BARUFFI; LAYERED LOOK: KRISTINA JUZAITIS

C·U·S·T·O·M INSTALLATION OF THE MONTH

BY STAN PINKWAS

SPLIT PERSONALITY

When invisibility's the goal, a unique theater's the answer.

Most videophiles like the high-tech look. But some like the no-tech look, preferring their media systems to be seen and heard only when needed, and otherwise kept out of sight. Without, of course, sacrificing quality. This was the challenge Greg White confronted in a new home in the Montreux Development in Issaquah, a suburb of Seattle, Washington. Hired by the home's builder, White's job was to create a nearly invisible audio/video system with an absolute minimum of visible components, screens, speakers and the like.

White, a system designer for Definitive Audio of Seattle and a member of the Custom Electronics Design and Installation Association (see box), succeeded by applying two strategies: one subtle, one dramatic. For the overall layout, he installed a unique in-wall signal distribution system. For drama, he gave the primary media room a split personality.

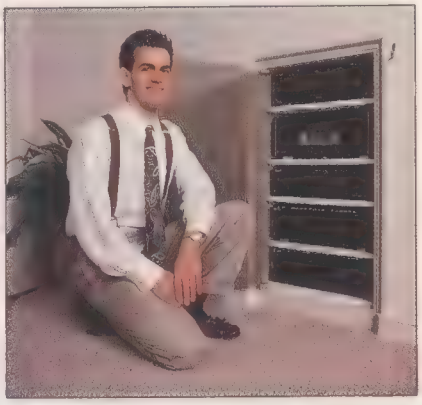
One moment it's a warm, inviting living room flooded with light from a large central window overlooking a stand of trees. The next moment, it's a crisp, efficient home theater running high-power action movies on a 100-inch screen. The secret is a retractable screen installed in the frame above the window. Instructing the screen to lower blocks the room's primary source of light and distraction.

The full project involved nine rooms, a patio, and some foyer and hall areas. These were divided into six zones by Sony's Digital Signal Transfer System, which White described as "the most affordable multiroom, multisource system on the market." It works by digitizing video, audio and control signals, then channeling them through ordinary coaxial cable to auxiliary amplifiers stationed in the various rooms. This eliminates the need for a lot of conventional cabling and makes it possible to transmit audio over long distances without losing quality or installing intermediate signal amps.

At the local amp end, signals are converted back to analog form, then fed into standard audio/video cables. The home's five auxiliary amps have bass and treble controls, as well as an output jack for adding stronger amps for extra speakers. Small keypads set into walls in each zone let users regulate the audio.

The wall pads, a unique feature of the DST system, stand out no more than a large light switch, yet make it extremely easy to control a multitude of functions. The simple layout for each pad includes a power button, a volume scale (with muting) and buttons for three video sources, two audio tape sources, two CD sources and a tuner.

The DST control equipment is tucked out of sight in the family room, which includes a secondary video system built around a 46-inch Sony rear-projection TV. A combi player, a VCR, an au-



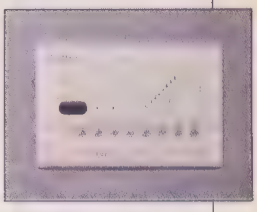
Barely Visible: System designer Greg White tucked one rack of gear into an unobtrusive alcove.

CEDIA

The Custom Electronic Design & Installation Association is a nationwide non-profit trade organization made up of companies that specialize in installing electronic entertainment, automation, security and communication systems in the home. CEDIA may be contacted by telephoning 1-800-CEDIA30 or by writing: CEDIA, 10400 Roberts Road, Palos Hills, IL 60465.

For additional information, circle no. 143 on Reader Service Card.





Wall Watcher: The DST wall pad has signal source and basic audio controls, plus an IR sensor for use with handheld remotes.

dio cassette deck and a tuner round out the system's signal sources.

The home theater—intended for serious nighttime movie watching—is the only room not wired into the DST layout. It was added after the basic system was already established, in a room originally intended for a pool table, after the client saw what it's now possible to do with home theaters. Since the room already included the large picture window, White solved two problems at once by installing the motorized screen as a window shade. A system devised by Definitive Audio automatically lowers the screen, dims the lights, turns on the theater electronics and starts the video projector.

The projector is a Sony 1270Q data grade model augmented by a line doubler and a color corrector, which give the system superb video quality even with the room lights up. Other media room components are stacked unobtrusively in an alcove under the stairwell. The video decks include Pioneer's top-of-the-line LD-S2 reference laserdisc player.

AUDIO IN EVERY ROOM

Audio components, also Sony's, include the TA-E1000 digital surround processor, a pair of TA-N55 amps for front and rear channels, and a TA-N110 ES amp bridged to deliver monaural power to the center channel.

Sonance speakers predominate in both the theater and the other rooms.

Open & Shut Case: The home theater (above), which turns into a living room (right) when the screen is raised, is complemented by a second, more compact video system in the family room (below).





Built into the walls and fitted to match surrounding surfaces, they create an audio environment that seems everywhere present yet barely visible. Sonance IIIs are used for the theater and family rooms, M30s for rear channels and smaller spaces, like a powder room and a laundry. Speakers also adorn the exterior spaces: A front entryway uses Sonance's IIIw, a weatherized version of the model III, while the patio has a pair of LS-1 speakers from AudioSource.

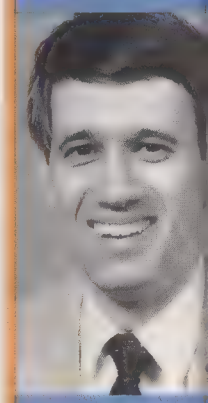
To enhance versatility, the den and the master bedroom have special wall jacks that let users plug extra video or audio sources directly into the network. In addition, the wiring scheme will accept extra amps so that the system can be expanded with more visible, more powerful speakers. Finally, in-wall options allow the system to be reconfigured so that each room can be made into a separate zone. ■

JEFF MILLER/SEATTLE

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TAPES & DISCS

NEW RELEASES



Home on the Range: Lt. John Dunbar (Kevin Costner, far left) and friends anticipate the famous buffalo run in *Dances With Wolves.*

FEATURE FILMS

Dances With Wolves

1990. Kevin Costner, Mary McDonnell, Graham Greene; dir. Costner. Hi-fi surround, cc. (PG-13) 180 min. priced for rental. Orion.

The Academy Award for Best Picture doesn't necessarily go to great art, or even to popular entertainment. It goes to a showroom-window movie, the picture with which the industry can best demonstrate its ability to bring serious subject matter to a large public with craft, taste and showmanship. *Dances With Wolves* swept the Oscars because Kevin Costner came across with just such a film when Hollywood needed it most.

It's an ambitious project, perfectly suited to the screen persona Costner has worked to establish—he's inherently decent, quietly humorous, skeptical of authority and willing to leap into the void. Costner plays Lt. John Dunbar, a Civil War veteran who sets out to establish relations with the Lakota Sioux, learns their language and culture, takes as his wife a white woman (Mary McDonnell) raised from childhood by the tribe, and throws in his lot with them even though he sees the coming of the white man will sweep them away. He makes the picture entirely his own. The other leads—McDonnell and the excellent Native American players led by Graham Greene and Rodney Grant—perform just as well, but Costner holds it all together with his work on both sides of the camera.

The movie is a moving elegy, admittedly idealized, to a lost way of life. As photographed by Dean Semler, everything has a bronzed quality to it, and so does John Barry's score. As director, Costner supplies all the pleasures of the big epic movie—grand vistas, crowd scenes and action sequences—with a restraint that doesn't diminish them.

Dances With Wolves, alas, fares far worse on this tape than it did in theaters. The big set-pieces are ruined by the cropped image—panned-and-scanned from the original Panavision—with the famous buffalo hunt reduced to the random flailing of animal limbs. This undermines the film's structure, so that the flaws (most notably the howling caricatures of the whites other than Costner and McDonnell) are more noticeable and the three-hour running time weighs more heavily. The much-ballyhooed "director's cut," still without an official release date, will be letterboxed—but it will run four hours. It would have been nice if Orion had released a letterboxed version of the theatrical cut. What you see here may be watchable, but it's less than the movie the Academy honored.

—Sol Louis Siegel

The Doors

1991. Val Kilmer, Meg Ryan; dir. Oliver Stone. Hi-fi surround, cc. (R) 135 min. $92.95. LIVE.

There is a scene early on in Oliver Stone's biopic *The Doors* in which Jim Morrison climbs through his soul mate Pam's window in the dead of night. She wakes and says, "You have a problem with doors?"

"A waste of time," replies Morrison. If only Oliver Stone hadn't taken these words to heart. When Stone's *The Doors* hit the theaters some months back, it had two things going for it: Val Kilmer's dead-on impersonation of Jim Morrison, and, in its technical execution, a stunning panoramic vision of the '60s era that fostered the Morrison persona. Unfortunately, those were virtually the only two elements that floated above a sea of historical inaccuracy. Stripped of its widescreen glory, cramped and compressed for the home screen, *The Doors* sacrifices precious half of its original assets.

What's left is an alternately shallow and pompous excavation of the Morrison legend, one that revels in all of Morrison's excesses (both physical and intellectual) without giving a clue as to what created that *drive* for excess. The moment Kilmer-as-Morrison starts spouting lines like, "I feel most alive confronting death," one just cringes and waits for the next piece of concert footage. To make matters worse, Stone has attempted to legitimize his version of events by populating the film with real people from the Doors' past. (Drummer John Densmore and producer Paul Rothchild make cameos, as does one-time Morrison lover Patricia Kennealy.) The end result looks like the most expensive "Movie of the Week" in history.



Leapin' Leather: Val Kilmer's uncanny impersonation of Jim Morrison is *The Doors*' saving grace.

With such thin material for a foundation, Stone's attempt to weave shamanistic imagery—replete with a bald-headed death specter who turns up at every portentous event—seems a luxury the director simply hasn't earned. One keeps waiting for Morrison to paraphrase Albert Brooks and shout, "I've seen the future! It's a bald-headed man who follows me around!"

—John Walker



New Mission: Bernard and Miss Bianca enlist the aid of an Aussie mouse in *The Rescuers Down Under.*

The Rescuers Down Under

1990. Anim. Voices of Bob Newhart, Eva Gabor, George C. Scott, John Candy. Hi-fi surround, cc. (G) 78 min. $24.99. Disney.

In the uncertain world of entertainment, some things *can* be taken for granted: Madonna's knack for controversy. Schwarzenegger's box office muscle. The quality of Disney animation.

What's surprising, then, about the second *Rescuers* film is not the stunning visuals, but that it actually surpasses the original. Plunking the intrepid mice Bernard and Miss Bianca into the Australian outback, the Disney team has a whole new world to explore, full of charming wallabies, kangaroos, even a comically evil salamander. The great golden eagle who lies at the center of the plot—a politically correct tussle between a sweet boy and an evil poacher (deliciously voiced by Scott)—contributes a panoramic flight that confirms the studio's technical mastery.

Bernard and Bianca, meanwhile, have ripened into an engaging—and engaged!—couple whose relationship, though temporarily challenged by a roguish Crocodile Dundee-type, is a model for gender equality. (Don't laugh—kids learn this from movies!)

As for repeatability, *Rescuers Down Under* passed the ultimate litmus test—during a week's family retreat with six kids, running the gamut from *Barney*-loving toddlers to *Terminator*-obsessed preteens, this was the most popular flick in the video library. A definite g'day's entertainment. **—Marianne Meyer**

Lonesome Dove

1989. Robert Duvall, Anjelica Huston, Danny Glover; dir. Simon Wincer. Hi-fi stereo, cc. (NR) 390 min. 2 cass. for rental, 4 cass. for purchase. $99.95. Cabin Fever.

It's rare for such talent to collaborate on a mere television miniseries, but the 6-1/2-hour *Lonesome Dove* more than surpasses the sum of its outstanding parts. Larry McMurtry's vision of the American West is sentimental in the most positive sense of the word—it's ro-

mantic, funny and moving.

Robert Duvall and Tommy Lee Jones portray former Texas Rangers and lifelong friends who decide to take on one more adventure before settling into old age: a cattle drive from the South Texas "town" of Lonesome Dove to Montana Territory. Both actors chew the scenery so much it's a wonder they don't choke on it—they're so charismatic, and their parts so well-written, the viewer almost ignores the spectacular scenery and detailed sets.

Things do slow up a bit when these two aren't around, but Australian director Simon Wincer paces *Lonesome Dove* well and nicely captures the isolation and utter banality of life in the Old West. Neither he nor McMurtry permits the characters to harbor any illusions about their relationship to nature. Indeed, the few amoral renegades who appear in *Lonesome Dove* meet unpleasant fates. The film is also notable for its presentation of fully drawn female characters; the bittersweet dialog between Duvall and Anjelica Huston (who plays his long-lost love) transcends anything of its kind in recent memory—even from the big screen.

—Lorraine Cademartori

The Icicle Thief

1989. Maurizio Nichetti, Caterina Sylos Labini; dir. Nichetti. Hi-fi stereo, subtitled. (NR) 84 min. $89.95. Fox Lorber.

In the realm of satire, Maurizio Nichetti's *The Icicle Thief* is the breakthrough equivalent of 3-D video without glasses—an hysterically funny film which simultaneously lampoons classic Italian cinema, students of classic Italian cinema, modern advertising and cross-cultural time travel.

Imagine a modern director's black-and-white homage to Vittorio De Sica's post-war masterpiece *The Bicycle Thief* invaded, via an electronic snafu, by a gorgeous full-color swimsuit model straight from a 1990s TV commercial. And imagine that this cultural pollinization goes both ways—the impoverished characters from the black-and-white art film find their way into the commercials of the 1990s, and are *quite* content to remain there if they have any say in the matter.

While this is going on, imagine the distress of viewers trying to follow the film on television, and imagine, particularly, the consternation of the film-within-a-film's director, a pompous film-school type played by Nichetti, who is sufficiently outraged by the invasion of his film to leap through the breach and attempt to sort things out himself!

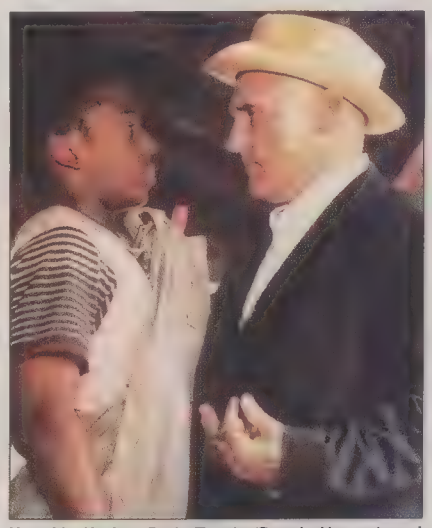
One needn't be familiar with the original *Bicycle Thief* to appreciate Nichetti's lampoon of the form—but to be familiar with it will only enhance one's respect for his subtle approach to comedy. *The Icicle Thief* is simply brilliant.

—JW

Paris Trout

1991. Dennis Hopper, Barbara Hershey, Ed Harris; dir. Stephen Gyllenhaal. Hi-fi stereo, cc. (R) 99 min. $89.98. Media.

In the title role of this made-for-cable feature, Dennis Hopper gives a performance that makes Frank Booth in *Blue Velvet* look like a warmup. Paris Trout runs the general store in a Georgia town in 1949, making loans on the side. His plain dignity masks a mania about protecting his property, which for him includes his wife Hanna (Barbara Hershey). "I misjudged his character," she explains in an understatement.



Knuckle Under: *Paris Trout*'s (Dennis Hopper) zeal to collect a debt leads to cold-blooded murder.

When a young black man defaults on a loan, Paris retaliates with a crime so outrageous that even the white authorities can't ignore it. He can't believe he's being prosecuted: "Those aren't the real rules and you know it!" What Hopper plays is no racist cartoon but a tragic monster who can't be bothered to cover

EDITOR'S CHOICE

by

kenneth korman

The success of the laserdisc format has already changed the way films are preserved and presented to the viewing public. But who could have predicted that the role of the Hollywood filmmaker might also be transformed by a medium intended for use in the home?



Laserdisc auteur Danny DeVito

Witness actor/director Danny DeVito, a self-described laserdisc fanatic who has conceived and executed a disc-only "special collector's edition" of his 1989 black comedy, **The War of the Roses** (FoxVideo, $69.95). With its near-perfect letterboxed transfer, DeVito's own analog-channel commentary and a CAV third side containing all kinds of interactive extras, this package easily surpasses the movie's original presentation in theaters. The director has finally "finished" his film, two years after the fact.

DeVito's personal stamp is indelible here—if nothing else, this surely marks the first time anyone has ever used his audio commentary to set up a joke completed later in the supplementary section. And this tale of marriage, divorce and greed-inspired revenge has acquired a special resonance over the last couple of years. All in all, a landmark release, and a boost for the video format of choice.

The same can also be said of the new widescreen laserdisc edition of David Lynch's **Wild at Heart** (Image Entertainment, $49.95). Though the director oversaw the new transfer, the story here isn't Lynch's involvement, but that of the film's vocal cult audience. Media Home Entertainment had planned to provide its pan-and-scan cassette transfer (which includes a few mind-numbing moments where the picture is actually squeezed to make it fit a TV screen) for the laserdisc edition. But a flood of letters requesting a letterboxed version turned the tide. It's reassuring to know that viewers have a say in what gets released on video.

his bigotry with hypocrisy. He simply doesn't understand what he's doing wrong, and he inspires pity and terror even at his worst.

Hershey gives a fascinating, ambiguous performance, as does Ed Harris as the lawyer who has more sympathy for her than for his client. Though the picture is beautifully made, director Stephen Gyllenhaal makes the common period-piece error of shooting everything in soft focus. But Hopper cuts through that haze like a burning sun through morning fog. **—SLS**

Scenes From a Mall

1991. Woody Allen, Bette Midler; dir. Paul Mazursky. Hi-fi surround, cc. (R) 87 min. $92.95. Touchstone.

Vittorio De Sica claimed adultery was the only drama of the bourgeoisie. In *Scenes From a Mall* it isn't drama, just mild diversion. Given the people involved, it should have been more.

Woody Allen and Bette Midler play a Southern California version of the sort of trendy couple you might see in one of Allen's own movies. Their day of shopping for anniversary gifts at an upscale mall turns into a series of public donnybrooks—scenes *in* a mall, if you will. The picture has an interesting look and feel, and the two stars are always fun to watch. But the material is pretty thin, the effort to stretch it shows, and the satiric targets are obvious. For Woody and Bette fans only. **—SLS**

CLASSICS

Citizen Kane

1941. Orson Welles, Joseph Cotten; dir. Welles. Hi-fi mono, cc. (NR) 119 min. (plus documentary) $19.98. Also $39.98, $99.98 special editions. Turner.

Citizen Kane may be the one black-and-white film Ted Turner won't dare colorize. Still, he does own the video rights to the 1941 classic, and has just reissued it in a special 50th-anniversary package.

The main lure of this new edition is a 23-minute bonus documentary, *Reflections of "Citizen Kane."* It's a trifle at best, containing little information most *Kane* buffs won't already know. Interview snippets with filmmakers such as Martin Scorsese and Brian DePalma are disappointingly impersonal, telling us nothing about how *Kane* influenced their own work. (Turner Home Entertainment also sells special editions of the movie featuring extra items for serious *Kane* connoisseurs. See "Gazette," Aug. '91.)



Golden Anniversary: Orson Welles' *Citizen Kane* is back in three new tape editions to commemorate the film's 50th birthday.

As for the movie, Turner's digitally remastered version is probably as good a one as will become available on VHS, although it's not perfect. Changeover marks and minor scratches are visible. However, it is the only closed-captioned version available. If you already own a decent copy, you won't need to reinvest in this package. If you don't, this is the version to add to your library. **—M. Faust**

Hannie Caulder

1971. Raquel Welch, Robert Culp, Christopher Lee; dir. Burt Kennedy. Hi-fi mono, cc. (R) 85 min. Paramount.

Hannie Caulder has a major problem: Raquel Welch. But she's also the reason for the film's existence—the producers clearly weren't looking for a great actress to play a frontier woman seeking revenge for her rape by three outlaws.



Imperfect Fit: Raquel Welch isn't *Hannie Caulder.*

They wanted an actress whose physique could serve as part of the scenery. They certainly got it, and anyone who can ignore the fact that Welch isn't convincing—she's too well-groomed, and talks and moves as though she's in a different movie than the rest of the cast—can enjoy this film.

For the rest of us, there are two supporting actors who make *Hannie Caulder* worth seeing. Robert Culp gives the performance of a lifetime as the bounty hunter who teaches Welch how to shoot, while Christopher Lee displays warmth and good humor as Culp's gunmaker friend. There's more electricity between these two actors than between Welch and Culp.

Culp's scenes do include flashes of lyricism reminiscent of John Ford's later works. Elsewhere, however, director Burt Kennedy moves unsteadily between brutal action/drama and bad comedy—the scenes involving outlaws Ernest Borgnine, Jack Elam and Strother Martin play like a cross between *The Wild Bunch* and *F-Troop*. In the end, the picture still seems a wrong-headed effort at building a film around "personality." The end credits are especially revealing: "Raquel Welch *is* Hannie Caulder." Uh huh.

—Bruce Eder

Children of Paradise

1944. Jean-Louis Barrault, Arletty; dir. Marcel Carne. Hi-fi mono, subtitled. (NR) 195 min. $79.95. Criterion LD $89.95. Home Vision Cinema.

Possibly no film better illustrates Shakespeare's adage that all the world's a stage than *Les Enfants du Paradise (Children of Paradise)*, the 1945 French



Love in Bloom: Baptiste, the hopeless romantic, woos the beautiful Garance both onstage and off in *Children of Paradise.*

classic making a long-overdue video debut.

Set in Paris of the 1840s, when theatergoing was a popular pastime of rich and poor alike, *Children of Paradise* centers on the free-spirited actress Garance and the four men who desire her: the cynical criminal Lacenaire; Lemaitre, Paris' most popular actor; the Count du Montray, who uses his wealth and power to control her; and Garance's true love, the mime Baptiste.

The bustling, vivacious world of the theater is a metaphor for the way these people approach life. Anyone not wearing his heart on his sleeve in this movie probably doesn't have one. "Dreams, life, they're the same," says Baptiste, "or else it's not worth living."

Often called the French *Gone With the Wind, Children of Paradise* is a movie in the grand style about larger-than-life people with larger-than-life passions, played in properly florid style by the top French actors of the time. (Only Arletty as Garance seems a bit wan to inspire so much passion.) Many crowded street scenes filled with acrobats, clowns and other performers keep the frame bursting with activity, and make the intimate moments feel even closer by contrast.

The film can be read on several levels—as an allegory about France under the Nazis, or the Marxist class struggle—but it doesn't need to be. It yields much simpler pleasures to the first-time viewer, who will want to return to this re-translated and re-subtitled edition again and again. **—MF**

LASERDISCS

Killiam Silent Classics

1925-28. B&W/tints. "It," "Son of the Sheik," "Steamboat Bill Jr." and "The Gold Rush." Digital. (NR) 68-82 min. each. CLV 2 sides each. $39.98 each. Voyager.

In 1927 Clara Bow starred in both *It* and the first Academy Award winner for Best Picture, *Wings*. By the '30s her Brooklyn accent had killed a career in talkies, and a lurid trial destroyed her personal life.

Females swooned *en masse* over *Son of the Sheik*'s Rudolph Valentino in 1926, but he was dead by the time it opened.

After Buster Keaton completed *Steamboat Bill Jr.* in 1928, he "sold out" to MGM. He hit there with *The Cameraman*, but as his career and marriage deteriorated, he turned to the bottle.

Charlie Chaplin married his teenage girlfriend, Lita Grey, after she announced her pregnancy during filming of *The Gold Rush*. Two years later, she sued him for divorce, and he suffered a nervous breakdown.



Winter Doldrums: *The Gold Rush* lured not-so-hardy dreamers—including Charlie Chaplin—to icy Alaska.

What's fascinating about the first four entries in Voyager's *Killiam Silent Classics* series is their context. Except for Chaplin, who would score later with *City Lights* and *Modern Times*, the stars reached a zenith in these films—Bow as the vivacious shopgirl who snares the boss (with rising star Gary Cooper, Bow's beau, in a tiny role), Valentino as a smooth desert seducer, Chaplin as a lonely prospector and Keaton as the dandified son of a grizzled river rat.

And these discs help viewers appreciate the context: The image is occasionally tinted to resemble early prints, and projection speed mimics the original. While time has taken its toll on some segments, each disc still offers classic images to cherish: the "cupid's bow" mouth of an effervescent redhead subsequently dubbed "The It Girl"; in a face swathed with cloth, the smoldering stare of Valentino; the unknowing calm of Keaton, immobile in a doorway while a house collapses over him during a cyclone; and the desperate daintiness of a starving Chaplin, dabbing his mouth with a napkin as he nibbles a worn leather shoe. These are some of the greatest legacies of the silent era.

—April P. Bernard

Day of the Jackal

1973. Edward Fox, Michel Lonsdale; dir. Fred Zinnemann. Digital stereo. (PG) 143 min. CLV 3 sides. $39.98. MCA/Universal.

With talk of a new world order grabbing the headlines these days, it's easy to forget how exciting the old world disorder was. Political upheaval in the three decades after World War II spurred a popular fascination with international intrigue—and fostered the release of dozens of great spy movies. One of the best, *Day of the Jackal*, tracks the efforts of a debonair British assassin (Edward Fox) assigned to kill Charles deGaulle, and an insightful French detective (Michel Lonsdale) out to stop him.

Shot in a just-the-facts style typical of the genre, *Jackal* looks a bit dated. It's short on characterization and devoid of big names. But in classic spy movie tradition, every frame is filled with suspense and beautiful European scenery. After a summer of high-budget megabombs, this disc is a welcome reminder that plot, style and skill go a lot farther than dollars. **—Brent Butterworth**

Kate Bush: The Whole Story

1985 comp. Digital stereo. 58 min. CLV 2 sides. $24.95. Pioneer Artists.

It's taken five years for this 13-song anthology to make it into Pioneer's U.S. catalog. (The Japanese release has long been a choice import, even at $100.) But the wait was just about worth it. The images are wonderful—Bush's mix of sensuality and surrealism is shown to great advantage, whether she's engaged in the exquisitely erotic dancing of "Running up That Hill" or acting out the moody psychodrama of "Breathing." And the color and sharpness are just about everything one could hope.

The only problem is with the sound—the digital tracks are reasonably bright and sharp, but fall well short of the vibrancy of EMI Records' British CD of this same material. According to Pioneer, the music was mastered from the video's analog music tracks, which would put it at least two or three generations away from an original studio master. A mild boost in volume—coupled with a few adjustments on an equalizer—can make up for this problem, but those with analog-only players should be warned that the analog music tracks are so soft, they're almost unusable.

In any case, the disc is a dazzling showcase for Bush and her videos, which do comprise an important part of her work. Since she's only undertaken a single tour in her entire career, she puts more of herself into these video appearances than most of her peers. **—BE**



Where It All Began: New tape and disc compilations feature early short films by director Martin Scorsese.

SPECIAL INTEREST

Two by Scorsese

1967-74. "Italianamerican," "The Big Shave." Dir. Martin Scorsese. Hi-fi mono. (NR) 55 min. $29.95. Home Vision.

Three by Scorsese

1967-78. "Italianamerican," "The Big Shave," "American Boy." Dir. Martin Scorsese. Digital mono. (NR) 109 min. CLV 2 sides. LD only. $49.95. Voyager.

With the recent video release of *GoodFellas*, Martin Scorsese's most popular film, the timing is perfect for a look at three of the director's early short films, all new to video. *Italianamerican* is a 1974 documentary about Scorsese's parents. You'll recognize them immediately from cameo appearances in their son's movies, notably Catherine Scorsese's role as Joe Pesci's doting mother in *GoodFellas*. Filmed in their Little Italy apartment, they reminisce about life in the ethnic ghettos of New York City during the '20s and '30s. This ingratiating short film is as flavorful as Mrs. Scorsese's famous sauce recipe, which her dutiful son includes in the credits.

The Big Shave (1967) is a cryptic five-minute short made when Scorsese was still studying film at New York University. To the tune of Bunny Berigan's "I Can't Get Started," a young man's morning shave escalates into a bloody act of self-mutilation. Subtitled "Viet '67," you can read into it what you will.

Available only on the Criterion *Three by Scorsese* laserdisc, *American Boy* (1978) is a companion piece to *Italianamerican*. Steven Prince, a friend of Scorsese's from the old neighborhood, chats about his experiences as a street hustler, drug addict and road manager for Neil Diamond.

Scorsese fans will recognize the stories in *American Boy* and *Italianamerican* as the raw material for much of *Mean Streets*, *Taxi Driver* and *GoodFellas*. What the two documentaries lack is the bravura visual sense Scorsese's fictions use to pull the viewer into his world. *Italianamerican* and *American Boy* may be all talk. But, as in all of Scorsese's films, the people are fascinating talkers. **—MF**

28 Up

1984. Dir. Michael Apted. Hi-fi mono. (NR) 136 min. $79.95. Real Video.

In 1964, Michael Apted directed what was to become a milestone in documentary cinema. Sponsored by Britain's Granada television channel, Apted filmed a cross-section of British seven-year-olds, interviewing 14 children on the subjects of race, money, class, love, marriage and their hopes for the future. The results were fascinating. But Apted parlayed the exercise into a grander scheme: Every seven years, he returned to his subjects and, when they were 14, 21 and 28 years old, filmed them again.

What one sees in *28 Up* is a spellbinding, often devastating, ultimately frustrating mixture of segments that isolate each subject and juxtapose snippets of each from the four eras. Upper-class snobs are redeemed by the aging process. Working-class children wrestle with their fate. Most affecting is a painful look at directionless, middle-class Neil, who goes from a fantastically free-thinking seven-year-old to a 28-year-old depressive roaming the countryside looking for a dry place to sleep.

28 Up frustrates most when it offers pat explanations for its subject's choices, and no one bothers to ask the subjects what the effect of appearing on national television every seven years has had on their lives. But, for all its failings, *28 Up* is a riveting slice of life. **—JW**

Shindig! Vols. 2, 3, 4

1991 comp. "Frat Party," "Motor City Magic," "Jackie Wilson." Dir. Artie Ripp. Hi-fi mono. 30 min. each. $14.95 each. Rhino.

For a brief spell in the mid-'60s *Shindig!* was *the* hip show, a network musical cavalcade produced for music fans *by* music fans—specifically Jack Good, an Englishman who had already made his bones with *Shindig!*'s British counterpart, *Ready, Steady, Go.* For all the competition's attempts at hipness, *Shindig!* was the show that came through, with the likes of the Rolling Stones jamming with Howlin' Wolf and production numbers that featured Jerry Lee Lewis, Jackie Wilson and the Righteous Brothers.

Now, following its Righteous Brothers compilation, Rhino Home Video has released the next three of a projected 12-volume series of *Shindig!* compilations Two volumes are linked by theme: "Frat Party" features classic acts like the Kingsmen performing "Louie Louie" along with rarer treasures like Roy Head's feet going crazy to "Treat Her Right" and the Sir Douglas Quintet doing a manic "She's About a Mover." "Motor City Magic" is a Motown extravaganza featuring Marvin, Smokey, the Supremes and all the rest at their grittiest. The third volume compiles a show's worth of material by Mr. Dynamite himself, Jackie Wilson, tearing through nine sweaty hits, including "Whole Lotta Shakin' Goin' On" with Jerry Lee Lewis and the Righteous Brothers.

Collectors may bemoan the edits in these shows, but for now, half ▪ loaf of *Shindig!* is better than none. **—JW**



Dream Girls: The Supremes ply that "Motor City Magic."



***Turtles* on the Half-shell:** The pre-teen set's favorite heroes are back in *The Secret of the Ooze.*

KIDVID

Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles II: The Secret of the Ooze

1991. David Warner, Ernie Reyes Jr.; dir. Michael Pressman. Hi-fi stereo, cc. (PG) 88 min. $22.95. New Line.

It's easy to understand why some parents object to the slam-bang action and relentless merchandising of the TMNT juggernaut. Still, I confess a fondness for these amphibious crime-fighting dudes. Most of what passes for kids' entertainment is devoid of quirky personality or strong female characters, and the Turtles' cartoons and first film had both. But the action figure upstarts have become a conglomerate less concerned with breaking tradition than with protecting a franchise. This *Ooze* reeks of formula and exploitation of its faithful audience.

Director Pressman here takes a sunnier view of New York City than can be found in the dark claustrophobia of the first film. The Turtles' new underground hideout, in an abandoned subway station, is an absolute Art Deco delight. But the plot—what little there is—merely rehashes the team's mutagen-inflicted origins and their beef with Splinter. The new April O'Neil lacks spunk, and the Turtles are still largely indistinguishable from each other. Rapper Vanilla Ice's cameo seems a cheap shill for the soundtrack LP and an effort to pad a film that, even under 90 minutes, drags. Only the venerable David Warner, happily slumming as a befuddled scientist with the formula for anti-Ooze, projects the self-deprecating charm that made the previous Turtles adventures contagious fun.

Welcome to the twilight of the preschool gods. **—MM**

The Brave Little Toaster

1987. Anim. Voices of Jon Lovitz, Phil Hartman; dir. Jerry Rees. Hi-fi stereo, cc. (NR) 90 min. $19.99. Disney.

Even in the children's animated film market, where any kind of PG fantasy goes, the premise of *The Brave Little Toaster* is ▪ stretch. Five household appliances—toaster, vacuum, electric blanket, radio and lamp—leave their cozy country cabin for the big city to reunite with their "master." Though it may sound like a parody, this earnest film has merited a Parents' Choice Award and screenings at prestigious venues like Manhattan's Film Forum.

And deservedly so. As Disney projects go, the film has a low-key, offbeat charm that adds to its Adult Enjoyment Quotient. Lovitz, of *Saturday Night Live* fame, contributes an endearing characterization as a feisty radio who speaks in vintage newscasts, while Hartman (also from *SNL*) offers wicked impersonations as a Jack Nicholson-like air conditioner and a Peter Lorre-esque overhead lamp.

Such descriptions should illustrate the bizarre anthropomorphisms at work here but, trust me, you'll get into it. The scene in which our intrepid heroes escape a repair shop will make you think twice about tossing that broken VCR.

—MM

DIRECTORY

HIGHLIGHTS OF THE MONTH

The Black Pirate
1926. B&W/tints. Douglas Fairbanks Sr., Donald Crisp, Billie Dove; dir. Albert Parker. Swashbuckler Fairbanks performs stunt after stunt—including a death-defying trip down a sail on a knife—in early Technicolor silent. Digital stereo. (NR) 126 min. LD $29.98. Republic.

The Chronicles of Narnia
1990-91. 3 vols. C.S. Lewis fantasies—"The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe," "Prince Caspian and the Voyage of the Dawn Treader" and "The Silver Chair"—brought to life in BBC/WonderWorks series. Stereo, cc. 540 min. VHS only $29.95 each, $79.95 set. Public Media.

Cooking at the Academy
1991. 13 vols. Stylish PBS series set at California Culinary Academy details basic techniques, then teaches how to apply them. Mono. 30 min. each. VHS only $14.95 each, $149.95 set. International Video Network.

Cousteau/Amazon
1983-84. 3 vols. Another Jacques-Yves Cousteau gem: 18 months and 4,000 miles culminate in "Journey to a Thousand Rivers," "The New Eldorado: Invaders and Exiles" and "River of the Future." Hi-fi mono. 98 min. each. VHS, Beta $19.98 each, $59.98 set. Turner.

Crusader Rabbit
1949. B&W. 2 vols. Rocky and Bullwinkle, step aside: Creator Jay Ward also produced this TV cartoon series about a sharp rabbit and his less gifted sidekick, Rags the Tiger. Hi-fi mono. (NR) Approx. 60-80 min. each. VHS only $12.95 each. Rhino.



Return Engagement: Collector's edition laserdiscs of *Gone With the Wind* enhance Vivien Leigh's beauty.

Flying Down to Rio
1933. B&W. Delores Del Rio, Gene Raymond, Fred Astaire, Ginger Rogers; dir. Thornton Freeland. Fred & Ginger's first screen pairing dazzles—especially as they dance the Carioca—in otherwise timeworn musical. Digital. (NR) 89 min. LD $29.95. RKO/Image.

The Godfather Part III
1990. Al Pacino, Andy Garcia, Diane Keaton, Talia Shire; dir. Francis Ford Coppola. Seven Academy Award nominations went to this chapter of the riveting saga. "Director's cut" includes nine minutes of unseen footage. Stereo, cc. (R) 170 min. VHS, Beta priced for rental. LD (digital surround) $39.95. Paramount.

Gone With the Wind
1939. Clark Gable, Vivien Leigh, Leslie Howard, Olivia de Havilland; dir. Victor Fleming. Watch this classic on TV? Fiddle dee dee! Collector's edition on laserdisc boasts extras galore: reissue trailers, premiere footage and more. Digital. (NR) 222 min. CAV 10 sides $99.98. MGM/UA.

The Living Planet
1987. 12 vols. Sir David Attenborough hosts in-depth look at the Earth in acclaimed documentary series. Mono. Approx. 720 min. VHS only Vol. 1 $9.99, Vols. 2-12 $24.99 each, set $199.80. Time-Life.

Masculin Feminin
1966. Jean-Pierre Leaud, Chantal Goya; dir. Jean-Luc Godard. French New Waver charts love affair in '60s Paris. Mono, Fr. w Eng. subtitles. (NR) 103 min. VHS only $69.95. New Yorker.

A Rage in Harlem
1991. Gregory Hines, Robin Givens, Danny Glover, Forest Whitaker; dir. Bill Duke. Locals buzz around Mississippi beauty—and her money. Hi-fi stereo. (R) 110 min. VHS only $92.99. HBO.

Simply Mad About the Mouse
1991. Eight artists, including Harry Connick Jr., Billy Joel and LL Cool J, reinterpret Disney tunes—from "When You Wish Upon a Star" to "Who's Afraid of the Big Bad Wolf"—in long-form music video. Hi-fi stereo. (NR) Approx. 35 min. VHS $19.99. LD $24.99. 8 $29.99. Buena Vista.

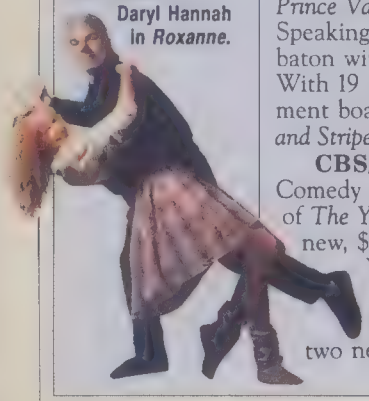
Stagecoach
1939. B&W. John Wayne, Claire Trevor, Thomas Mitchell; dir. John Ford. All-time great western catapulted the Ringo Kid to stardom. Digital, letterboxed, cc. (NR) 99 min. LD $34.98. Warner.

Switch
1991. Ellen Barkin, Jimmy Smits; wr./dir. Blake Edwards. Murdered womanizer returns as sizzling blonde in high heels. Hi-fi stereo, cc. (R) 104 min. VHS $92.99 LD (digital surround) $29.98. HBO.

The Thorn Birds
1983. 4 vols. Richard Chamberlain, Rachel

Compiled by April P. Bernard

Labels For Less



Steve Martin and Daryl Hannah in *Roxanne.*

You may be too scared to answer the doorbell on Halloween while watching one of **RCA/Columbia**'s "Grave Deals," six horrors led by *Critters* and *976-EVIL* and priced from $14.95 to $19.95. You'd be better off with movies that made their killings at the box office: RCA/Columbia is re-releasing 10 blockbusters, including *The Big Chill, Roxanne* and *Five Easy Pieces,* at $14.95.

A trio of delightful award-winners, also from RCA/Columbia, is highlighted by 1989's stunning *The Bear,* reduced to $19.95. **FoxVideo** jumps on the family fare bandwagon with 12 titles, $14.98 each. New to video are *Prince Valiant, My Friend Flicka* and *Ring of Bright Water.* Speaking of bandwagons, FoxVideo grabs the conductor's baton with "The Great American Musical Collection." With 19 titles priced from $19.98 to $29.98, the assortment boasts four new releases: *Daddy Long Legs, Stars and Stripes Forever, Sun Valley Serenade* and *Orchestra Wives.*

CBS/Fox is playing it just for laughs with "British Comedy Invasion II," which ranges from $14.98 episodes of *The Young Ones, Fawlty Towers* and *Ripping Yarns* to new, $19.98 installments of other BBC comedies....

You've been seeing Abbott and Costello on postage stamps. Now see the slapstick duo on video. **MCA/Universal** is offering 10 titles—two never released on video before—at $14.95 each.

—APB

Ward, Barbara Stanwyck, Jean Simmons, Christopher Plummer; dir. Daryl Duke. Praise the Lord and pass the Kleenex: Emmy-winning miniseries based on Colleen McCullough best-seller follows priest in love with Australian girl. Hi-fi mono, cc. (NR) 486 min. VHS, Beta, Sp.-dubbed VHS $199.92. Warner.

COMEDY

Bullseye!
1991. Michael Caine, Roger Moore, Sally Kirkland; dir. Michael Winner. Caine and Moore tackle dual roles as bumbling crooks who target diamonds owned by lookalike scientists. Hi-fi surround. (PG-13) 95 min. VHS $89.95. LD (stereo) $34.95. RCA/Columbia.

The First-Ever National Lampoon Made-for-Video Movie in the History of the World: Meet the Parents
1991. Emo Phillips; dir. Greg Glionna. Offbeat (to say the least) comedian plans peaceful weekend with fiancee's parents. Result: chaos. Hi-fi stereo. (NR) 70 min. VHS only $19.95. J2 Communications.

The Marrying Man
1991. Kim Basinger, Alec Baldwin; dir. Jerry Rees; wr. Neil Simon. Wealthy playboy weds lounge singer—again and again—in 1940s lust story. Hi-fi stereo, cc. (R) 116 min. VHS, Beta $92.95. Buena Vista.

Oscar
1991. Sylvester Stallone, Don Ameche, Tim Curry; dir. John Landis. *Rocky* takes comedic turn—and goes down for the count. Hi-fi surround, cc. (PG) 109 min. VHS, Beta $92.95. Touchstone.

Waiting for the Light
1990. Shirley MacLaine, Teri Garr; wr./dir. Christopher Monger. Woman inherits diner, enlists madcap aunt to help run the business. Hi-fi ultra-stereo, cc. (PG) VHS $92.95. LD (digital stereo) $34.95. RCA/Columbia.

DRAMA

Cadence
1990. Charlie Sheen, Martin Sheen, Larry Fishburne; dir. Martin Sheen. Military piece marks Sheen's debut as motion picture director. Stereo, cc. (PG-13) 97 min. VHS $92.98. LD (digital) $29.98. Republic.

Closet Land
1991. Alan Rickman, Madeleine Stowe; dir. Radha Bharadwaj. Human Rights 101: Life of children's book author turns inside-out after accusations of anti-government sentiments. Hi-fi surround, cc. (R) 95 min. VHS, Beta $92.98. Media.

A Kiss Before Dying
1991. Sean Young, Matt Dillon, Max von Sydow; dir. James Dearden. Second-rate thriller—twin marries her sister's murderer—based on Ira Levin novel. Hi-fi surround, cc. (R) 93 min. VHS, Beta priced for rental. LD (digital surround) $34.98. MCA/Universal.

The Pistol: The Birth of a Legend
1990. Adam Guier, Millie Perkins, Nick Benedict; dir. Frank C. Schroeder. Old-fashioned family entertainment chronicling

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DIRECTORY

childhood of basketball legend "Pistol" Pete Maravich. Hi-fi surround, cc. (G) 104 min. VHS, Beta $89.95. SVS.

Police
1985. Gerard Depardieu, Sophie Marceau; dir. Maurice Pialat. *Cyrano* used to be a cop! Mono, Fr. w/Eng. subtitles. (NR) 113 min. VHS only $79.95. New Yorker.

ACTION/ADVENTURE

Cover-Up
1991. Dolph Lundgren, Louis Gossett Jr; dir. Manny Coto. Journalist investigates terrorist attacks on U.S. naval compound near Tel Aviv. Stereo, cc. (R) 89 min. VHS $92.95. LD (digital) $39.95. LIVE.

The Perfect Weapon
1991. Jeff Speakman, Mako; dir. Mark Di-Salle. *Kickboxer* director teams with real-life black belt Speakman. Stereo, cc. (R) 85 min. VHS, Beta priced for rental. LD (digital surround) $34.95. Paramount.

Robot Jox
1990. Gary Graham, Paul Koslo; dir. Stuart Gordon. Instead of donning boxing gloves, futuristic warriors fight via robots. Hi-fi ultra-stereo. (PG) 85 min. VHS $89.95. LD $34.95. RCA/Columbia.

SPECIAL-INTEREST

The Godfather Family: A Look Inside
1991. Behind-the-scenes look at the Corleones, one of America's favorite Families. Tapes available only with three *Godfather* movies in collector's edition. Stereo. 73 min. VHS, Beta $150 set. LD (digital stereo) $34.95, $129.95 set. Paramount.

Hollywood Remembers
1990. 4 vols. Today's greats—Jessica Lange, Kathleen Turner, Glenn Close and Clint Eastwood—host retrospectives of yesterday's greats—Vivien Leigh, Myrna Loy, Greta Garbo and Gary Cooper. Hi-fi mono. Approx. 47 min. each. VHS, Beta $19.98 each. Turner.

Kids Explore America's National Parks
1991. Newest volume from "Where in the World" series for five- to 11-year-olds. Stereo. 30 min. VHS only $19.95. Encounter.

Superstar: The Life and Times of Andy Warhol
1991. Even after his death, pop artist snags another hour and a half of fame. Mono. (NR) 91 min. VHS $89.95. LD $29.95. LIVE.

Talking With Confidence: A Guide to Starting, Continuing and Ending Conversations With Anyone, Anytime, Anywhere
1991. Pr. nar. Don Gabor. Title says it all. Mono. 60 min. VHS only $29.95. Conversation Arts Media.

SPORTS AND FITNESS

Instant Workout
1991. Kathy Smith, in her 10th exercise video, leads three 20-minute segments: "Toning," "Cardio" and "Stretching." Hi-fi stereo. 60 min. VHS, Beta $19.98. Media.

9 Tips From 9 Legends of Golf
1991. 2 vols. Sam Snead, Gene Littler, Don

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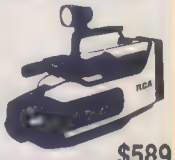
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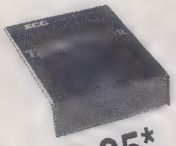
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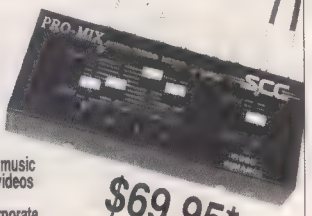
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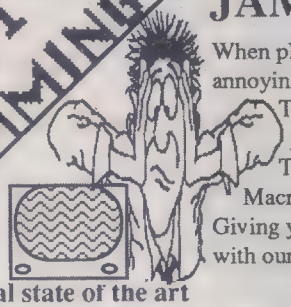
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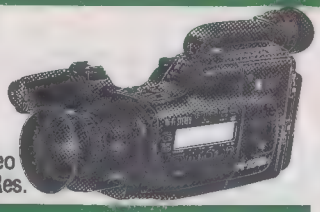
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1964. B&W. Anthony Quinn, Alan Bates; dir. Michael Cacoyannis. Mikis Theodorakis score highlights tale of zesty Greek peasant. Digital. (NR) 141 min. $49.98. FoxVideo.

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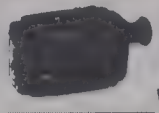
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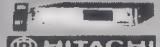
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BETA VCR

continued from page 15

hard to read at some angles, although backlighting makes operation in a darkened room easy. A contrast control might have helped. Finding the touch screen you need can be difficult until you learn which screen does what and how to get to it. Low but audible clicks confirm that the remote has transmitted a command. These inconveniences disappear with familiarity. Ease of use starts out as good, but becomes excellent with practice.

Picture quality is excellent. At the BIs speed, it is truly outstanding. Colors look rich and constant. At the BIs speed, dubs from 8mm and VHS produce almost no noticeable loss in picture quality. Audio quality is also excellent. We rate the deck very good to excellent—its only demerit is that it takes a while to learn how to operate. ■

HI8 CAMCORDER

continued from page 16

lenses. There is no manual zoom lever, but the addition of a two-speed power zoom makes this less important.

Following the concept that the TR series is intended for travel, the clock can be set for 24 time zones around the world at the touch of two buttons. Each zone has a key city name displayed in the viewfinder. It also features easy daylight-saving time adjustment. Other attractive features include wireless remote control, shutter speeds to 1/10,000-second, auto/manual iris, auto/hold/fixed white balance, a superimposer with scroll and reverse, edit search that operates in both camera and VTR playback modes and an onscreen zoom/exposure indicator.

The TR81 looks a lot like Sony's 8mm CCD-TR7 ("Videotests," Nov. '90)—it is about the same size and only two ounces heavier. The layout follows the tradition set by earlier TR-series camcorders, with the right side serving as the grip. Several seldom-used buttons, such as edit, Hi8 on/off and remote control on/off, are hidden behind the tilting viewfinder.

On the left side, a panel covers controls for exposure, white balance, shutter speed and autofocus. Beginners can slide this panel back to cover the controls and activate the full auto mode. Sliding the panel forward activates the controls, which return to the settings used before the cover was closed.

A thumbwheel for manual iris adjustment sits behind the exposure control. This is an improvement over the TR7's backlight compensator button—the manual iris allows very precise compensation, and such special effects as underexposure for high color saturation.

The camcorder is very easy to connect for playback and editing. It has jacks for S-video, video, stereo audio and DC out for the RF adapter plus a switch to change the signal jacks from output to input. Like other Sony camcorders, it has a LANC jack, making it compatible with a variety of editing controllers.

The remote control, housed in a plastic belt clip, is about the size of a large matchbook. It has a hold switch to render it inoperative and buttons for start/stop, tele, wide, rewind/search, fast forward/search, stop, play and pause.

The TR81 is actually easier to use than earlier TR models because there is no manual zoom lever or macro switch. Autofocus is very good—the user need only switch to manual focus if there is too little contrast or too much brightness behind the subject, if there are multiple subjects at different distances, if there are many horizontal objects in the frame, or if a dirty pane of glass separates the camcorder and the subject. The remote control is invaluable for playback, and for including the shooter in the picture. Ease of use is excellent.

The TR81 offers full Hi8 resolution. Its picture quality is slightly below that of the best Hi8 camcorders, like Sony's V5000 and V801 and Canon's A1 Digital. But these are all much larger and heavier. We rate picture quality very good, comparable to some full-size Hi8s, but much better than any other subcompact we've tested.

Its audio quality is good to very good, and its audio features—stereo sound, selectable channel output and a wind noise switch—significantly improve its performance. Our measurement standards dictate a very good overall rating for the TR81, but its small size and Hi8 capability may make it our all-time favorite camcorder. ■

COMBI PLAYER

continued from page 18

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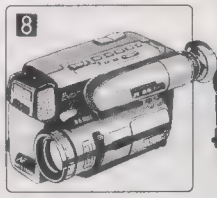
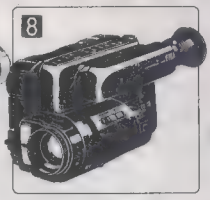
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VM-714	Color Viewfinder	Call
VM-715	E.I.S.	Call
VM-718	30x Zoom	Call

VIDEO RECORDERS

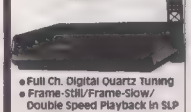
VH-6210	Childproof	Call
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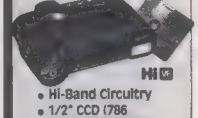
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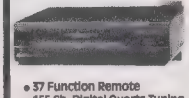
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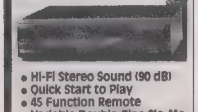
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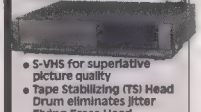
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Choosing The Best Camcorder For '91: Canon



Canon A1 Digital

The following is an excerpt of an interview with Larry Peterson, Senior Marketing Director of Not Just Video, Inc., (the largest authorized Canon video dealer in New York) and Frank Lamb, a retail marketing analyst.

Q.: What would you advise a prospective camcorder buyer?

A.: First, a customer should feel comfortable with the camcorder manufacturer. Name recognition is very important. In a recent consumer report, Canon received the number one rating.

Q. With the many brands available in the market place, why does the Canon line stand out as superior?

A.: Canon is concerned primarily with great optics. They are the leading 35mm camera company, and image technology is what Canon is all about. That's why Canon video lenses are used by TV stations across the country–that very same quality is at work in every Canon 8mm camcorder.

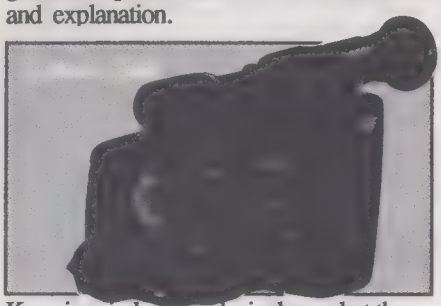
Q.: What other features of Canon camcorders help explain their popularity and high rating?

A.: There's plenty! The moment someone enters our Canon showroom and picks up any Canon camera, they immmediately notice the quality and craftsmanship in every unit. Each model number is very user friendly, comes with a full featured wireless remote control, and is packaged as a kit with alll the basic needed accessories. In addition, Canon makes all accessories readily available for purchase, so thier customers can build a complete system! Other manufacturers might make the camcorders available but accessoreis are always a hassle to find.

Q.: As a leading retailer, how do you find consumer confidence?

A.: Even during this economic downturn, consumers turn to us, as our excellent reputation gives them the confidence needed to buy mail order. At the same time they're taking advantage of up to 40% off the local selling price!

Although our showroom prices are somewhat higher than our discounted mail order prices, consumers in our vicinity find that it is worth the slight add- itional cost to gain our expert hands-on demonstration and explanation.



Keep in mind, we exclusively market the Canon line. So many times a customer walks into some store confused, and walks out even *more* confused! We've addressed this problem in our retail outlook, making our store "customer friendly". The customer leaves *without* being confused and *with* a confidence in the camera purchased and satisfaction in the establishment it was purchased from.

Q. Which camcorder would you personally reccommend?

A.: The Canon A1 Digital, without a doubt. Just check the most recent consumer guide rating camcorders. The A1 Digital got straight A's. The features on this camera are incredible!

Q.: Could you reccommed a less expensive unit?

A.: Yes, and less expensive does not have to mean a major sacrifice in quality. There are many worth buying. Certainly the E65 which comes packaged with a hard case and video light, would be first on my list. A camera like this – with a 10x zoom, fade, high speed shutter, remote *and* a truly great price, would be *my* pick.

Let me take advantage of this interview also Frank, to let consumers know that at ***Not Just Video,*** we really sell "Just the *Best* Video". Whether you call our Toll Free number ***1-800-456-9890,*** to buy mail order, or contact one of our retail showrooms, in *New York City (212) 219-3022,* or in *Boca Raton, Fl (407)488-0625,* you will receive professional advice and sales help from our staff of trained sales people. As authorized, factory direct, Canon Video dealers, all our equipment is factory fresh with the full USA warranty! Customers do not realize that many companies they contact are not authorized canon dealers, do not have the product in stock, and may try to sell them other brands. We have ten years of retail experience behind us and we sincerely value each and every customer. That's why we're the East Coast's largest Canon Video Dealer!

I .hope I've helped you make the *right choice!*



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- Sportsfinder for action shooting
- 2 Lux low light capability.
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A1 DIGITAL

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- 2 Lux low light capability
- Character generator
- 180° FlixiGrip



CANON H800:

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CANON E40:

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CANON H850:

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COMBI PLAYER

continued from page 74

searching easy, but there is no shuttle on the remote. Indicators on the player and onscreen displays (which can be deactivated) keep the user apprised of all functions.

It also features edit playback, which makes it easy to dub a CD to an audio cassette. At the end of the last cut that will fit on the first side of the tape, the deck pauses so the user can turn the tape over. Any tape length can be specified. The warp function chooses a tune from the second half of the CD that will just fill the last space on the first side of the tape. Tracks can even be recorded out of order. Displays include elapsed time, time remaining and total time as well as track information. When playing CDs, it produces an onscreen audio output level display.

The disc tray cover and shuttle dial occupy the upper half of the front panel. The lower half of the panel holds most of the playback controls needed for normal laserdisc/CD playback. Nearby sits a headphone jack with a level control.

The rear panel has F-connectors for RF input and output, a channel 3/4 output selecter, S-video and video outputs, two sets of stereo audio outputs and a removable power cord. The remote control is similar to those of most inexpensive combi players with a full set of playback and programming controls.

Using the player for standard playback is very easy—turn on the power, open the player, insert a disc, close the player and play is automatic. Chapter skip, scan, intro scan and search get you to the point you want quickly. Here, the clear-scan function helps considerably on CLVs. On CAVs, the user may select the order for 20 chapters, which is of little use for movies but great for music videos.

Experienced laserdisc users may miss features like a multispeed shuttle dial, a jog dial, jog/shuttle control on the remote and digital memory for special effects on CLV discs. But all these options would raise the cost of the player considerably. Ease of operation is very good.

The LX-101 delivers an outstanding picture for its price range, just shy of the performance of the best combi players. Its audio performance is excellent, so we rate its overall performance very good to excellent. ■

TECH TIPS

Remote finder

Had enough of your remote control's eternal vanishing act? Invest $4 in a battery-operated key finder that emits a beep when you whistle or clap. Attach the key finder to the back of the remote with a piece of strong tape. The next time the remote disappears, whistle and it will call to you. N.E. Parish
Woodland Park, Colorado

Blinded by the light

When videotaping a wedding, party or family event indoors, you usually need a video light. However, the light may bother your subjects, especially if it is rated at 30 watts or higher. If you get complaints, don't turn off the light. Instead, tilt it up 15 degrees, or far enough so that your subjects are comfortable and you still get usable footage.
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PV19
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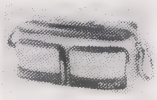
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31-45 B ☐ 60+ D ☐

2. What type of still photographic equipment have you used (please check all that apply)
110 camera E ☐
35mm point and shoot F ☐
35mm manual focus SLF G ☐
35mm auto focus SLR H ☐
other I ☐

3. What type of film(s) have you used for still photography?
110 J ☐ 35mm slide L ☐
35mm K ☐ other M ☐

4. Do you ever dub in voice and/or music on your home videos?
Yes N ☐ No O ☐
Don't own video camera P ☐

5. If it were available, would you be interested in a device to transfer still photo formats to video?
Yes Q ☐ No R ☐

6. What features would be most appealing to you in a still photo to video transfer unit?
No limit on film type S ☐ Negative & positive transfer ability 1 ☐
Ease of use T ☐ Portability (small footprint) 2 ☐
Color correction U ☐
Manual zoom V ☐ Fade in/fade out feature 3 ☐
Auto Zoom W ☐
Slide feeder X ☐
Masking capability Y ☐
Cropping capability Z ☐

7. What is the most you would be willing to pay for a unit that fit your needs?
$1500 - $2000 4 ☐ $400 - $699 7 ☐
$1000 - $1499 5 ☐ less than $400 8 ☐
$700 - $999 6 ☐

8. Are you currently a subscriber to VIDEO? 9 ☐ Yes 10 ☐ No

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166	167	168	169	170	171	172	173	174	175	176	177	178	179	180
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1. What is your age?
18-30 A ☐ 45-59 C ☐
31-45 B ☐ 60+ D ☐

2. What type of still photographic equipment have you used (please check all that apply)
110 camera E ☐
35mm point and shoot F ☐
35mm manual focus SLF G ☐
35mm auto focus SLR H ☐
other I ☐

3. What type of film(s) have you used for still photography?
110 J ☐ 35mm slide L ☐
35mm K ☐ other M ☐

4. Do you ever dub in voice and/or music on your home videos?
Yes N ☐ No O ☐
Don't own video camera P ☐

5. If it were available, would you be interested in a device to transfer still photo formats to video?
Yes Q ☐ No R ☐

6. What features would be most appealing to you in a still photo to video transfer unit?
No limit on film type S ☐ Negative & positive transfer ability 1 ☐
Ease of use T ☐ Portability (small footprint) 2 ☐
Color correction U ☐
Manual zoom V ☐ Fade in/fade out feature 3 ☐
Auto Zoom W ☐
Slide feeder X ☐
Masking capability Y ☐
Cropping capability Z ☐

7. What is the most you would be willing to pay for a unit that fit your needs?
$1500 - $2000 4 ☐ $400 - $699 7 ☐
$1000 - $1499 5 ☐ less than $400 8 ☐
$700 - $999 6 ☐

8. Are you currently a subscriber to VIDEO? 9 ☐ Yes 10 ☐ No

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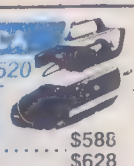
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BIG BLUE

continued from page 49

other embarrassing features on still images of your video subjects.

Digitizers reveal the main limitation of PC video—unrealistic images. While many digitizers can store full 24-bit, 16.7-million-color images, most PC video boards (the Targa excepted) only reproduce 256 colors. That's usually plenty for creating graphics from scratch and digitizing logos. But with only 256 colors, complex subjects, like people, don't look real. In comparison, Amiga graphics adapters produce images in up to 4,096 colors—not as realistic as Toaster or NTSC video (both of which have about two million colors), but a big improvement over PCs.

One of the best digitizers for desktop video is Digital Vision's new $599 ComputerEyes RT. Comprising a software package and a board with composite and S-video inputs, the RT displays incoming video in a window on the PC screen. Operation is completely intuitive—wait for the right image and hit the return key to grab it. The image can be displayed full-screen, and contrast, brightness, hue and color can be altered. The RT can also digitize in black-and-white and high-contrast modes, and in several resolutions. It stores images in a wide variety of file formats, so it should be compatible with almost any PC paint program.

All-in-one systems like those offered by Video Associates are the latest wave in PC desktop video. The company's systems revolve around the MicroKey/A, a $1,495 board that combines a digital audio system with a VGA graphics adapter and an NTSC encoder. The MicroKey/A digitizes music, sound effects or voiceovers from a microphone or other audio sources, and synchronizes the sounds with graphics, titles and animations. A $695 genlock and $195 keyer allow superimposing of graphics over video. The company's $895 MicroKey/DigiView digitizer features a full-color, full-motion video preview window that may be positioned anywhere on the screen.

THE SOFTWARE STORY

Software is what really puts the dazzle in desktop video. For most videographers, one good paint/animation program should do almost everything they need. The best-known PC version of these is Autodesk's $299 *Animator*, which can be used to create graphics, modify digitized images and create static or scrolling titles. *Animator* features several advanced animation modes, including tweening, which metamorphoses one object into another. A more advanced version, the $795 *Animator Pro*, offers higher resolution and more animation modes.

Electronic Arts offers a simpler, but less expensive program called *Deluxe Paint Animation*. The $135 package is an enhanced version of the company's popular *Deluxe Paint III*, which has become the unofficial standard for Amiga animation.

Animator is the more sophisticated of the two, but both programs are much better for desktop video than paint programs designed for desktop publishing. Most publishing programs use type fonts that are too intricate for an NTSC monitor to reproduce without annoying flicker, and few offer the animation capabilities that turn dull titles into attention-getters. If you already have a paint program you like, you can use it, but it's a good idea to keep an NTSC monitor plugged in so you can see how your work

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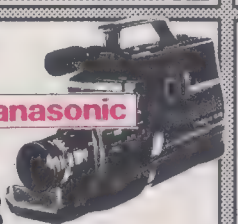
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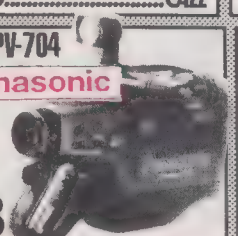


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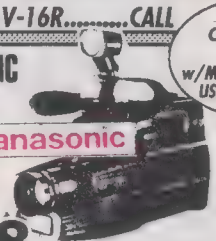


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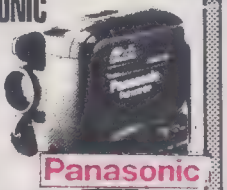


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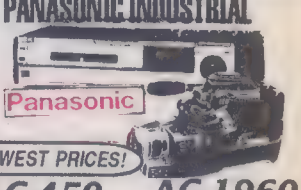
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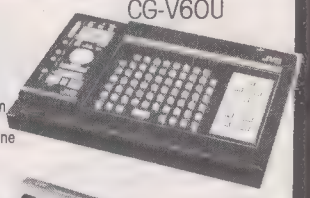


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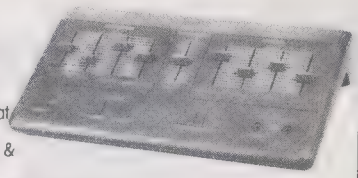
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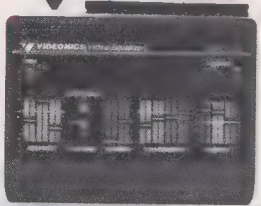
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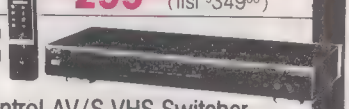


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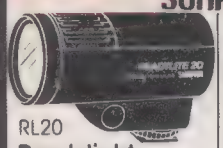
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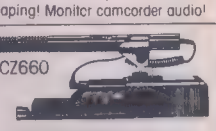
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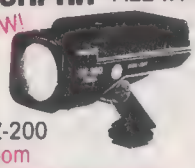
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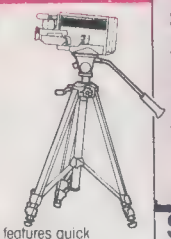


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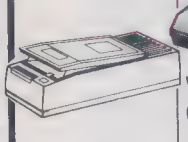


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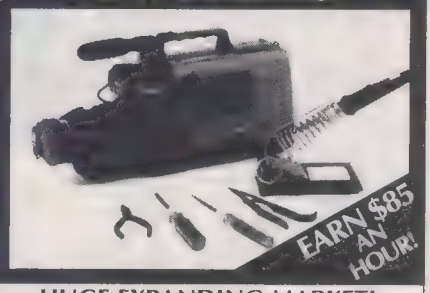
Animation usually takes lots of practice, and in many cases must be created frame by frame, instead of using the automated—but limited—animation tools built into a paint program. And when using animation tools, the user has to rely on a wire-frame model for real-time preview, which often doesn't convey what the animation will really look like. To produce a full-color, real-time animation, most programs have to render each frame separately, a process that takes several minutes.

Gold Disk, another company known for its Amiga software, solves these problems with its new $495 *Animation Works Interactive*. This is the program many desktop videographers have been waiting for—one that can create and modify animations quickly and easily. The user can produce animated figures, or actors, using the program's background and cel editor functions. The movie editor function combines these actors in complex animations. It doesn't render frames—it simply calls up the actors from memory and moves them around, so it's very fast. Subjects can even be attached to one another, so a moon can orbit a rotating planet while the planet orbits the sun.

A few software packages combine all the elements of desktop video into one production. One program, Santa Fe Software's $149 *Media Manager*, is actually a multimedia database, but it can sequence audio, still images and *Animator*-created animations. *Media Manager* should find many applications in corporate video, especially in fields such as real estate, where images and text must be stored and presented together.

After reading about the many options available for PC video (and more are coming out every month), many videographers may consider desktop video overwhelming and overpriced. But even though getting into desktop video requires weeks of learning and thousands of dollars of investment, the rewards are well worth it. Most of those who bite the bullet and get into desktop video find that it's like going from a $50 point-and-shoot camera to a $2,000 professional SLR—the extra degree of control allows you to get the product of your imagination onto videotape in a way that plain video editing may never achieve. ■

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PC VIDEO

continued from page 48

or PS/2 PC with a hard drive, DOS 3.2 or higher, Microsoft *Windows* 3.0 or higher and 2M RAM. Gold Disk, 20675 South Western Avenue, Suite 120, Torrance, CA 90501; 213-320-5080.

• *Santa Fe Media Manager*. Sequences animations, still frames and sound. Runs on any 286, 386 or 486 PC with DOS 3.3 or higher, at least 640K RAM and 320K expanded memory, a hard drive and a Super VGA graphics adapter. HSC Software, 1661 Lincoln Boulevard, Suite 101, Santa Monica, CA 90404; 213-392-8441. **—BB**

TECH TIP

Macro magic

One of my favorite taping techniques is to set my camcorder to macro focus before starting a long shot, then zoom out of macro after beginning the scene. The result is a scene that starts very far out of focus, then moves into focus in a few seconds. An even better effect can be created by superimposing a title. The sharpness of the title will contrast nicely with the blurriness at the start of the scene. This only works with camcorders that have a macro release at the end of the zoom lever.

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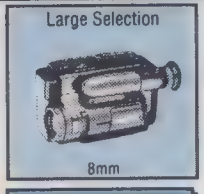
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PV-10B	PV-21
PV-19	PV-41

VIDEO RECORDERS

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PV-4070	PV-4164
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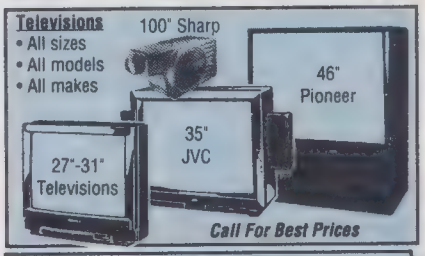
CAMCORDERS

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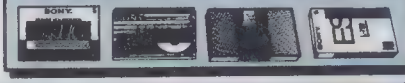
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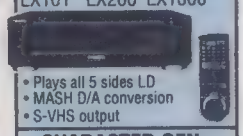
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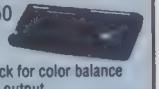
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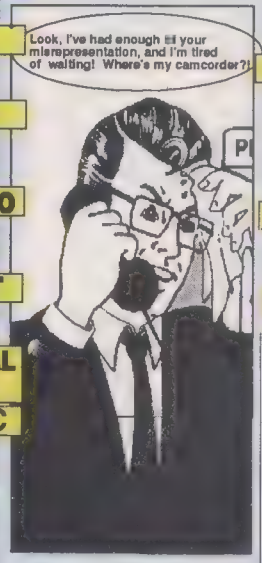
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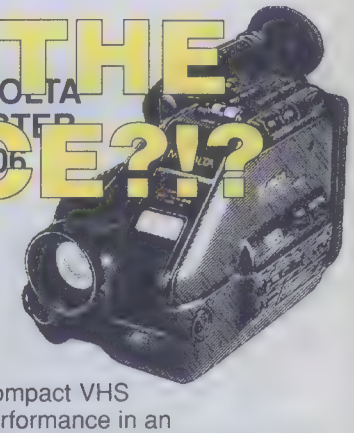
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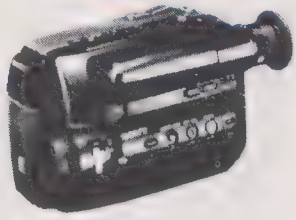
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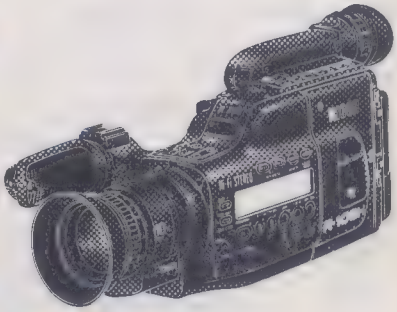
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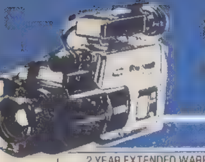
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LX-1000 .. 699.00 LX-200 .... 449.00
LX-101 ..... CALL PV-VPI 779.00

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PV-M429 . 979.00 PV-M2049 639.00
PV-M1328 419.00 PV-M2050 649.00

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AG-1260 . 279.00 AG-40U 829.00
AG-2400 . 729.00 AG-170 .... 829.95
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AG-1730 . 499.00 AG-460 ... 2609.00
WV-F70 1999.95 WV-KB12A 149.95
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HRD-680 . 269.00 HRD-940 .. 389.00
HRD-760 . 299.00 HRD-980 ..... CALL
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VN-840 ... 699.00 VN-950 .. 949.95

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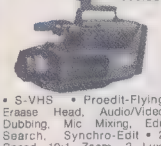
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CC-560
SAME AS HITACHI VM-S8200

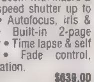


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RCA

CAMCORDERS



PRO 850
Features: • Super compact like Sony TR series weighs only 1.7 pounds • 1/2" CCD with 270,000 pixels (Sonly has only 1/3" CCD) • Low light sensitive-down to 3 lux • 6:1 zoom with macro & telemacro • High speed shutter up to 1/10,000 second • Autofocus, iris & white balance • Built-in 2-page character generator • Time lapse & self timer recording • Fade control, backlight compensation.

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VR-301 ..... CALL VR-671 .. 299.00
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VR-335 ..... CALL VR-675 .. 339.00
VR-340 ... 219.00 VR-680 ..... CALL
VR-341 ... 219.00 VR-690 ..... CALL
VR-345 ... 239.00 VR-685 .. 429.00
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VM-2410CL 669.00 VM-E10 .. 659.00
VM-3300 . 699.00 VM-E15 .. 719.00
VM-5350 . 779.00 VM-HI8 . 1079.00

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CG-696 ... 709.00 CG-710 ... 989.00
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VG-7980 . 339.00 VG-4012 . 235.00
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CVL-335 . 849.00 VR-9965 . 309.00
CVL-345 . 929.00 VR-9970 . 499.00
CVL-610 . 649.00 VR-9980 . 699.00

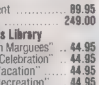
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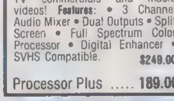
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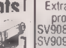
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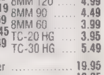
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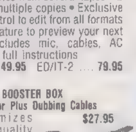
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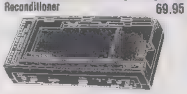
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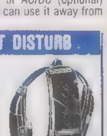
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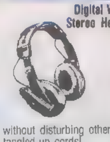
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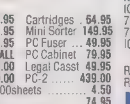
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WONDER YEARS

continued from page 51

conditions are the key to the tape's chemical stability, Sony's answer is based on storage conditions. If a user keeps his older tapes at a constant temperature between 59 and 77 degrees and a relative humidity between 40 and 60 percent, Sony predicts both metal and oxide tapes will last 15 years without significant decay.

It is important to note the word constant. Sony recommends there be little fluctuation in temperature or humidity to prevent the base film from expanding and contracting. But since most of us don't always occupy such ideally controlled environments, the 15 year figure may be unrealistically high for average consumers.

For important, irreplaceable tapes, Sony tape product manager Les Burger recommends consumers follow the practice of many professional video producers and make protection copies from master tapes every three to five years. These copies, though down a generation, at least provide insurance against deterioration or failure of the original master tape. Burger also recommends winding important tapes at least once a year.

STORAGE FOR THE LONG HAUL

The question of life expectancy is an important one at the National Archives in Washington, D.C., the home of about 45,000 videotapes which have historical significance. Bill Murphy, chief of the motion picture, sound and video branch of the archives, says stability of the tape stock is only one factor in how long a tape will last.

"We use a lot of tape in our research rooms and we notice that cassettes jam, stretch and break down after a while," explains Murphy. "It can happen on the first play or the 500th play. And then there is the question of technology. For-

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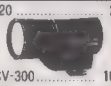
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Murphy says tapes at the National Archives are stored in vaults with a temperature range between 60 and 70 degrees and a relative humidity of 40 to 60 percent. This will change, he says, when tapes are moved in 1994 to a new climate-controlled facility that will maintain a temperature of 65 degrees and 30 percent humidity.

Another preservation step the National Archives is taking is to have users of videotape play dubs, never masters. But the dubs are conventional analog versions. No effort is being made to dub to an "archival" master for storage. "Most archives are playing a wait-and-see strategy on the question of copying onto a so-called master video format for long-term preservation," says Murphy.

A survey of several consumer tape manufacturers found no real disagreement with the Sony study. "Fifteen years is as good a guess as anybody's," notes Andrew DaPuzzo, director of sales for BASF videotape products. "Naturally the environment in which the tape is stored is a major factor."

TDK tape product manager Steve Diamond says he knows of no published data on tape life expectancy by his company. He adds, however, that TDK does tell consumers they can expect at least 100 plays on a videocassette if good storage practices are followed.

Maxell also declines to predict a life expectancy for its tape products. "The type of testing Sony has done tells part of the story and not all of the story," says George McBride, manager for engineering at Maxell. "That's the reason until we have the data to back the statement we will say our tape will last only as long as it has lasted. I would never commit to a statement like 15 years. I agree with them that it should last at least 15 years but I don't have any evidence at this point."

At 3-M, spokesman Phil Hage says he thinks the Sony study is conservative since many tapes have remained in good shape for longer than 15 years. "You are not going to get us to say that tape lasts forever or it's only good for 15 years, but the research our laboratory has done shows results that are consistent with what Sony has found," says Hage.

When a tape is so valuable that money is no object for its protection, the ultimate in archival preservation is to make a digital backup copy at a profes-

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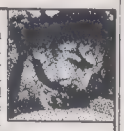
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FAMILY NUDIST LIVING. Parents, siblings. Color catalog, 60 titles, $4. NAT-FAM(V), Box 838, Venice, CA 90294.

YOUR CHOICE XXX HOTTEST! SEXIEST! KINKIEST! AMATEUR! Peeping Tom - $34.95, Shaved Clean Then Up Her Tookey - $34.95, Hardcore Sex - $34.95, Up The Skirt - $34.95, Sex Slave - $49.95, Wet & Nasty - $59.95. SHIPPING $5.50 -- SIGN 21. GSR, 561 Keystone Avenue, Suite 335, Reno, NV 89503.

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SPECIAL OFFERS FOR NEW CUSTOMERS ONLY!

Your complete source for adult entertainment, hundreds of XXX videos, magazines, stimulating fantasy items, sex toys and novelties. ALL COLOR! Fast delivery. Privacy and satisfaction guarantees. Discount prices on a top quality collection!



❑ New updated hot superstar preview tape of 120 different sex stars. 120 minutes. **#PRV1** $9.95 (Refunded on next order)

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THE BEST!

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❑ 75 minutes of the hot Angela Baron in 28 scenes. **#VCT11** $9.95 (Refunded on next order)

Send to:
LEISURE TIME PRODUCTS 5 Dept. **HW1**
P.O. Box 827 Gary, IN 46401-9900

❑ YES! Send my FREE catalog immediately! Video purchases enclose full amount plus $4.25 P/H. I enclose
❑ Check ❑ Money Order
DO NOT SEND CASH!
Specify ❑ VHS ❑ BETA
VISA/MC CALL 1-800-874-8960

NAME_____

ADDRESS_____

CITY_____

STATE_____ ZIP_____

SIG/B.DATE_____

I am 18 or older and request this material.
No orders shipped without signature.

For additional information, circle No. 73 on Reader Service Card.



FREE ADULT VIDEOS

We represent the midwest's largest manufacturers of genuine XXX adult videos, and quite frankly we're willing to give our product away in hopes of future business. Seeing is believing and we're convinced that once you see the great products we have to offer, you'll become a regular buying customer. This is a one-time offer, one order per household please... so act now! Each video is recorded in high resolution SUPER-VISION® with digitally processed sound and guaranteed uncensored or your money back!!

Send To: **DEAL MAKERS** Dept. **HW1**
P.O. Box "S" Michigan City In. 46360

❑ YES!! Send ALL 30 full-length videos - FREE!! I enclose $15 for P/H (50¢ each). Canadians and Foreigners remit US funds. Sorry, no COD's ❑ BETA ❑ VHS

Name_____

Address_____

City_____ State_____

Zip_____ Sign (over 19)_____



GIRLS! GIRLS! GIRLS! 49¢ Ea in quantity



We've assembled this collection of the hottest XXX rated lesbian titles for this low introductory offer. Each **30 minute** tape features every form of lesbian lust imaginable including a cavalcade of todays luscious lesbians. Choose from these **50 sizzling titles.**

- ❑ [redacted] & [redacted]
- ❑ [redacted] To [redacted]
- ❑ [redacted]
- ❑ [redacted] Strokes
- ❑ Lez Be Friends
- ❑ Silky [redacted]
- ❑ Hot & Pink
- ❑ Kinky Coeds
- ❑ Batteries Included
- ❑ [redacted] Massage
- ❑ Lez Lust
- ❑ Snatch Sisters
- ❑ Vibrating Vixens
- ❑ [redacted] Eaters
- ❑ [redacted] Friends
- ❑ [redacted] Pals
- ❑ Strap It On
- ❑ [redacted] Squats
- ❑ [redacted] Lappers
- ❑ Double [redacted]
- ❑ [redacted] Riders
- ❑ Hot Lickin' Lez
- ❑ Best Friends
- ❑ Finger [redacted]
- ❑ [redacted] Snack
- ❑ [redacted] Buff
- ❑ Tongues
- ❑ [redacted] R Us
- ❑ Touch Me
- ❑ [redacted] Hunt
- ❑ [redacted]
- ❑ Honey Pot
- ❑ Shaved [redacted]
- ❑ [redacted]
- ❑ [redacted] Divers
- ❑ [redacted] To [redacted]
- ❑ Luscious Lesbian
- ❑ Eating Out
- ❑ Lesbian Lovers
- ❑ Lips On Lips
- ❑ Satin Dolls
- ❑ Toys of Joy
- ❑ Girlfriends
- ❑ Womans World
- ❑ [redacted] Ticklers
- ❑ Toys for Girls
- ❑ Lez Go Naked
- ❑ Gash Bash
- ❑ [redacted] Push
- ❑ Dripping [redacted]

All models are 18 yrs. of age. Records on file

❑ **Any 4 titles $13** ❑ **Any 25 titles $2**
❑ **Any 10 titles $18** ❑ **Any 50 titles $2**
Add $5 for P/H on all orders
❑ **Add $2 for Delivery Insurance**
Please Specify: ❑ VHS ❑ BETA

Send entire ad & remittance: **FEMALE FINALE** Dept. **HW1**
P.O. Box 12007
Merrillville, IN 46411

Name_____

Add._____

City_____

St./Zip_____

No orders shipped without signature

_____
Signature Age/B-da

I am 18 yrs. old & request this material

4 Super-Hot Videos Only $12.95

Plus 3 BONUS VIDEOS FREE!

VIDEO $110 VALUE

2½ Incredible Hours Of Nonstop Adult Video Action!



SUNNY MCKAY

Scarlet Fantasies — Burning with desire! Sizzling starlet Cameo gets deep satisfaction from manly Cal Jammer...Nina Hartley and Sunny McKay explore sapphic sex...and statuesque Jennifer Stewart treats super-stud Tom Byron to a steamy afternoon of sexual abandon.

Battle Of The Squirts — You can see 'em cumming! Watch sizzling beauties Terri Lynn, Fallon and Nikki Charm make love to handsome guys and saucy babes and explode with gushing, wet female orgasms.



NIKKI CHARM



BARBARA DARE

The Legend of the Kama Sutra — This erotic classic—banned for over 70 years—now comes to life in this action-packed video. In lavish settings, you'll see buxom Christy Canyon and luscious newcomers enjoy classic and unusual sex positions — all shown here in explicit detail. A must for every sexual connoisseur.



CHRISTY CANYON

Shaved & Dangerous — Lovely Diedre Holland turns on hubby John Dough by shaving her marvelous muff clean as a whistle. Then see Tori Welles and Jennifer Stewart make it with hot and horny cops, Axel Wolfe and Jerry Butler. Nonstop erotic action!

Plus — Yours FREE

WET! WILD! WICKED! — This trio of sexy sizzlers is so hot, we can't describe the action here. We can say that they feature stars like Barbara Dare, Heather Hunter and Tori Welles (in a grinding ride that drives Randy West wild) plus lesbian sex that'll take your breath away!

All 7 videos–yours for the super-low price of $12.95. *Order Today!*

CLIP AND MAIL WITH PAYMENT TODAY! Adam & Eve P.O. Box 900, Carrboro, NC 27510

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FREE! HOT SEX CATALOG

Order By Phone 800-334-3474

9 am-9 pm, 7 days a week

Adam & Eve Video Offer P.O. Box 900, Dept. **R29** Carrboro, NC 27510

❑ **Yes!** Send my 4 HOT VIDEOS plus my 3 FREE BONUS VIDEOS in plain packaging. I understand I'm covered by your 30-day money-back guarantee. All videos will arrive on one videocassette. #2491

Check (✓) one: I want my videos in ❑ VHS ❑ Beta format.

Method of Payment: ❑ Check or Bank Money Order (Sorry, No Cash Or COD's)
❑ Charge my: ❑ VISA ❑ MasterCard

ACCT. NO. / EXP. DATE

NAME (PLEASE PRINT CLEARLY)

ADDRESS

CITY STATE ZIP

VIDEO TOTAL $12.95
DELIVERY & HANDLING $ 3.00
RUSH SERVICE ADD $2.00 $
ORDER TOTAL $

By submitting this order, I certify that I am an adult age 18 or older (Age 21 in AL, MS, NE, WY).

For additional information, circle No. 75 on Reader Service Card.















ALL MAN TO MAN VIDEOS!

We represent the midwests largest manufacturer of XXX adult videos. In order to gain you as a valued customer we are offering you a FREE gay video tape. We're sure that after seeing a sample of our top quality products you'll become a satisfied customer. Each video is recorded in high resolution SUPERVISION with digitally processed sound. This is a one time offer, one order per household so ACT NOW! All video tapes are guaranteed totally uncensored or your MONEY BACK!

FREE!!! FREE!!! FREE!!! FREE!!! FREE!!! FREE!!!







Send to: DUDE VIDEO Dept. HW1
P.O. Box S, Michigan City, IN, 46360

❑ YES! Send all 30 full length videos FREE!! I enclose $15 for P/H (50¢ each). Canadians and foreigners remit in U.S. funds. Sorry no COD'S.
I enlose ❑ Check ❑ Money Order *Man to man action at 1-800-767-7550.*

NAME_____ ADDRESS_____
CITY_____ ST. _____ ZIP_____
SIGNATURE / B.DATE _____
I am over 18 years old and request this material. No orders shipped without signature.

For additional information, circle No. 71 on Reader Service Card.

HOT AND HEAVY ALL MALE ACTION

HOT MEN! HOT MEN! HOT MEN! HOT MEN! HOT MEN! HOT MEN! HOT MEN! HOT MEN!



HO MEN HO MEN HO MEN HO MEN HO MEN HO MEN HO MEN HO MEN

AS LOW AS 1¢ EACH!

We're looking for active buyers of genuine all-male sex videos! On 60 minute cassette In order to expand our list of satisfied customers, we've cut out the middleman in order to bring yo a most unusual offer. For 1¢ each, plus shipping costs, you can have the hottest all male videos t be found anywhere! With this purchase you will b eligible for regular discounts on new hardcore releases and specialty videos from our giant catalog. Be assured there are no strings attached to this offer and no pressure to purchase anythin in the future!

GET THESE 42 HEATED HITS!

❑ SLAMMERS	❑ HEAVY LOAD
❑ EBONY SEX	❑ BLOW IT
❑ SLICK HANDS	❑ LUST
❑ HAND JOBS	❑ KING KONG
❑ HEAVY MEAT	❑ BEEF JERKY
❑ GROUP SEX	❑ GROUP SHOT
❑ FACE SHOTS	❑ PLUG 'EM UP
❑ UNLOAD IT	❑ MAKE ME
❑ STROKIN' IT	❑ HOT TIMES
❑ PETER EATER	❑ REAMERS
❑ LICKIN' STICK	❑ DOUBLE TIME
❑ TAKE IT ALL	❑ GANG WAY
❑ ALL THE WAY	❑ TEN INCHES
❑ TWIN BEAT	❑ FILL IT UP
❑ ERUPTIONS	❑ ON MY OWN
❑ SWALLOW IT	❑ BOTTOMS UP
❑ PLUNGE	❑ WET SHORTS
❑ DEEPER LOAD	❑ GOLDEN MEN
❑ EAT THIS	❑ UP ALL NIGHT
❑ DEEP IN HIM	❑ DIRTY SHEETS
❑ GREASY PALM	❑ BEND OVER

BONUS!! 90 C-SHOT VIDEO ***FREE!!*** IF YOU ORDER WITHIN THE NEXT 30 DAYS!!

SEND TO: MALE MAN Dept. HW1
P.O. Box M877, Gary, IN 46401-0877

❑ Yes!! Send me my 42 videos! I understand that my order is placed within 30 days I will receive the C-SHOT video absolutely FREE!
I've enclosed $25 (1¢ plus 59¢ each for shipping). Canadians and foreigners remit in U.S. funds. I enclose ❑ CHECK ❑ MONEY ORDER ❑ VHS ❑ BET

HOT AND HEAVY ALL GUY ACTION IS AT 1-800-767-7550.

NAME_____
ADDRESS_____
CITY_____ ST._____ ZIP_____
SIG./B.DATE I am over 18 yrs. old and request this mate
No orders shipped without signature.

Only 1¢ !! Only 1¢ !! Only 1¢ !! Only 1¢ !! Only 1¢ !! Only 1¢ !!

SUPER HOT XXX ALL MALE VIDEOS!!

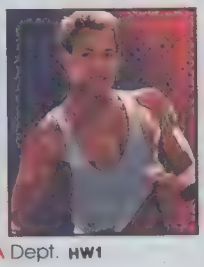
HOURS AND HOURS OF HARDCORE SEX AT THE UNBELIEVABLE LOW PRICE OF 1¢!



20 full length hardcore features for 1¢ each plus postage and handling! Nobody undersells Male Mania and we want to prove it! If you're an active buyer of all male sex products then we have an offer for our first time customers. This offer comes with no strings attached and no pressure to buy anything in the future. We're convinced that after you see our products and all the hot male stars we have to offer you'll become a repeat customer! All this for the unheard of price of 1¢ per video! All videos are uncensored and come with a satisfaction guarantee and fresh from the factory. So start your collection today and save money with Male Mania!











Send to: MALE MANIA Dept. HW1
P.O. Box 12007
Merrillville, IN 46411

I enclose $19 (1¢ Each plus 98¢ each for P&H) as payment in full in the form of
❑ Check ❑ Money Order

CALL 1-800-767-7550 FOR HOT, ALL MALE ACTION!
Canadians and foreigners remit in U.S. funds.
Sorry no COD'S. Please specify ❑ VHS ❑ BETA

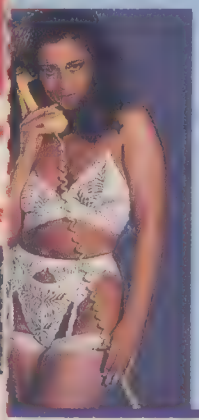
Name_____
Address_____
City_____ St.____ Zip_____
Sig./B.Date _____
I am over 18 yrs. old and request this material.
No orders shipped without signature.

Only 1¢ !! Only 1¢ !! Only 1¢ !! Only 1¢ !! Only 1¢ !! Only 1¢ !!

Petite Ladies

Good Things COME In Small Packages!!

1-900-680-6666



The Petite Ladies Line

Call now for the real names and home phone numbers of petite ladies and beautiful women who want to meet you!

($2 a minute, Adults Over 18).

BOTTOMS UP!

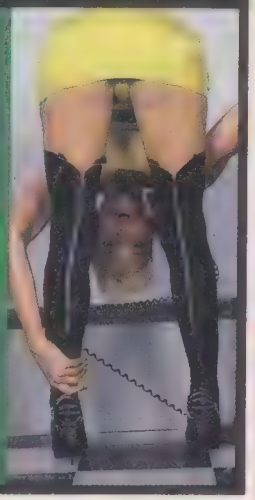
*Only one line gives you the real names and phone numbers of women who share your **deepest passion!***

THE BOTTOM LINE

1-900

903-1991

$2 each minute. You must be over 18.



WHAT WILL YOU DO IF I'M BAD?



1-900

BADD

Call now to meet real women who want to know your answer. No paid operators. Just real women who need to know what you'll do if they're bad!

($2 a minute). Adults over 18 only.

MARRIED? FOOL AROUND?



CALL 1-900

288-HOTS

4 6 8 7

Meet Available Gals Who Share Your Special Needs!

($2 per minute, Over 18 Only.)

QUICK RELEASE "OH BABY"



CALL NOW!

1-900-884-5366

It's what you really want!

(Only $2 a minute). Over 18 Only.

DOUBLE YOUR PLEASURE



TWO HEADS ARE BETTER

1-900-976-6388

"We're waiting"

$2 per minute. Over 18 Only.

OVERWEIGHT MEN WANTED

Good Looking Ladies Want You! Call 1-900

288-1211



Now there's a phoneline that helps match up big men with slender, attractive women who adore a big belly.

$2 a min., Adults over 18.

TEACHER'S PET

And that's just for starters!

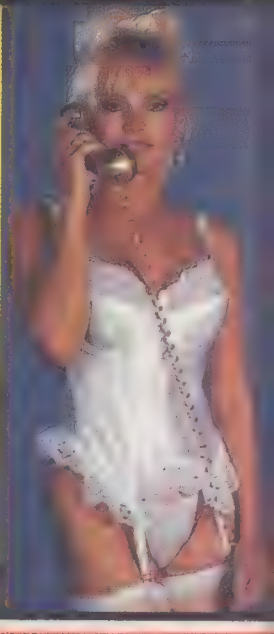
Give the teacher something special...

Call 1-900

860-PLAY

7 5 2 9

($2 a minute). Adults over 18 only.



Younger Women Seek Older Men



FOR SPECIAL TIMES TOGETHER

CALL 1-900-740-BODS

2 6 3 7

Many younger women *are* turned on by older "experienced" men. Call the line that brings sincere younger women together with mature men who can give them what they need in an adult relationship. Meet the younger gal of your dreams. Call now!

(Only $2 a minute). Adults Over 18 Only Please.

ONE ON ONE CONNECTIONS

TWO DOLLARS A MINUTE, ADULTS OVER 18.

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For additional information, circle No. 72 on Reader Service Card

ALL STAR [redacted] QUEENS • 50 VIDEOS

CHRISTY CANYON

ONLY 45¢ Each In Qty.



❑ VOL. #1 ❑ VOL #2 ❑ VOL. #3

These larger than life busty beauties have graced the pages of popular men's magazines in recent months. For your pleasure we have captured these double "DD" delights on video in uncensored, explicit action with the most dynamic studs in adult films today. Featuring every form of [redacted] Action known to man, YOU WON'T BELIEVE YOUR EYES!!!
And with due respect to your privacy, everything we ship to you will be plainly packaged and securely wrapped without the slightest indication of its contents.



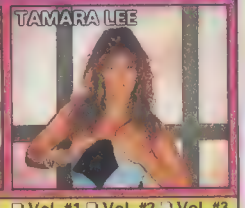
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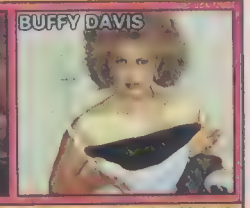
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OUR GUARANTEE:
Each video is guaranteed to contain the stars of your choosing, recorded in high resolution, HQ video in totally uncensored full length hardcore sex scenes. You must comletely satisfied or return for a prompt and courteous credit towards future purchases.

USE ENTIRE AD TO ORDER

Send To: PRIZE VIDEOS Dept. HW1 P.O. Box 12007 Merrillville, IN 46411

OUR SPECTACULAR PRICES
❑ Any 1for $8 ❑ Any 10 for $13 ❑ Any 25 for $17
❑ ALL 50 FOR THE LOW PRICE OF $22.50

Please Specify: ❑ VHS ❑ BETA
Canadians Remit in US funds. No foreign COD's
❑ Send COD. I Enclose $8 Extra plus $4 P/H
❑ I am over 19 years old and request this material.

Sign / / Age Date

Rush items indicated. I enclose $_____ plus $4 P/H

Name_____

Addr._____ Apt.#_____

City_____

State_____ Zip_____

SIZZLING SHE MALES JUST 75¢ each in qty.

THIRTY VIDEOS



We've assembled the most bizarre collection of hot XXX full length She-Male videos and are making them available for a limited time at low introductor prices. If you're a connoisseur of this special treat then we know that after you take advantage of this tremendous buy, you'll order again and again from our huge library of tapes. Each 30 minute tape is ju jammed with the most unbelievable She-Male actio you've ever seen.

MONEY BACK GUARANTEE
You must be delighted with your purchase or return it within 30 days for exchange, refund or credit. Minus P & H.

- ❑ Trans Fest
- ❑ Surprise!
- ❑ Pumping [redacted]
- ❑ Undercover
- ❑ [redacted] Babes
- ❑ Chicks With [redacted]
- ❑ Femme Jocks
- ❑ Tops & Bottoms
- ❑ Trans Way
- ❑ Filled [redacted]
- ❑ Transitory States
- ❑ Fake Out
- ❑ Tour De Trans
- ❑ Sultry Dudes
- ❑ Trans Affair
- ❑ He-She[redacted]
- ❑ Tube Steak
- ❑ [redacted] Dolls
- ❑ [redacted] & [redacted]
- ❑ Sizzling She-Males
- ❑ [redacted] Skirts
- ❑ Half N Half
- ❑ Born Male
- ❑ Lovely Leilani
- ❑ Best Of Julie Bond
- ❑ Transsexual Wrestling
- ❑ Gender Bender
- ❑ Bizarre Babes
- ❑ Deviant Diversion
- ❑ Best Of Sharon Lee

All models are 18 yrs. of age. Records on file.

PRICES:
❑ Any one for $7
❑ Any ten for $14
❑ Any twenty for $20
❑ All thirty for $22.50

Postage & Handling
❑ 1 to10 videos $4
❑ 20 videos $5
❑ 30 videos $6
SPECIFY ❑ VHS ❑ BET

Send entire ad & remittance: HANDS ON VIDEO Dept. HW1 P.O. Box 12007 Merrillville, IN 4641

Name _____
Add. _____
City _____
St. / Zip _____

Signature B/Da
I am 18 yrs. of age & request this material

For additional information, circle No. 83 on Reader Service Card.

HOT FANTASIES QUICK RELEASE

















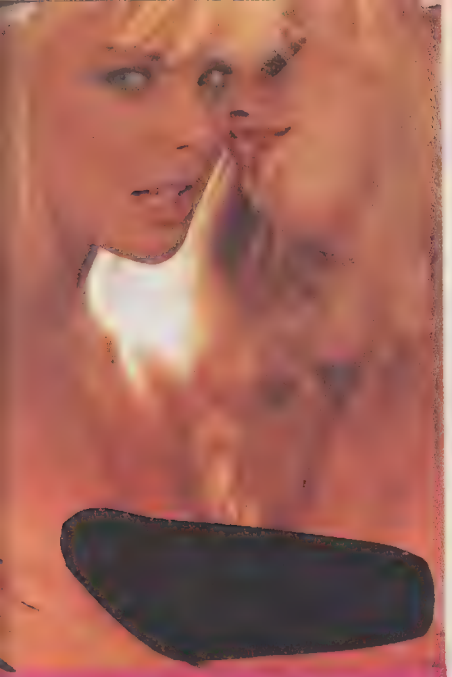








For additional information, circle No. 84 on Reader Service Card.



FREE
Phone Sex
Double Dippers Delight
212
643-2693
ADULTS OVER 18 ONLY

CENTERFOLD HOT LINE
1-900-884-4511
CALL NOW FOR REAL CENTERFOLD FANTASIES!
FOR ADULTS OVER 21 ONLY. $2 A MINUTE

HOT MODELS TELL ALL
1-900-933-5454
FOR ADULTS OVER 21 ONLY. $2 A MINUTE

A KISS IS JUST A KISS...OR IS IT?
KISS AND TELL GIRLS CONFESS ALL
1-900 288-8355

KISSABLE LIPS
PERSONAL CONTACTS WITH GIRLS WHO LOVE TO KISS
1-900-680-8783
ADULTS OVER 21 ONLY. $2 A MINUTE.

For additional information, circle No. 81 on Reader Service Card.

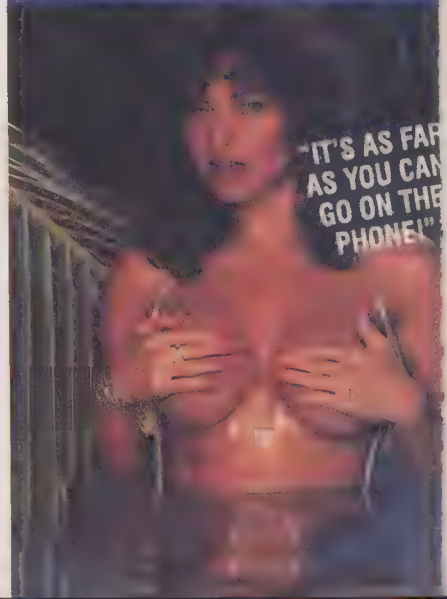


LESBIAN LOVERS WANT YOU TO JOIN IN, TWO'S COMPANY, THREE'S A BLAST!
EXPERIENCE THEIR WILDEST FANTASIES.
1-900-680-3333
$2 Per minute. Adults over 18 only.

COLLEGE ROOMATES SHARE THEIR BEDTIME FANTASIES.
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SPECIAL INTERESTS
You Know What I Mean!
215-747-4753
FOR FREE HOT SAMPLES
MUST BE 18 PLUS



50 NAUGHTY NEWCOMERS

49¢

Sex Stars of the Nineties...
featuring hours and hours of sizzling sex!
Free color catalog with every order!

Meet your new favorites...



- TIANNA
- PARA-DICE
- QUISHA
- CASEE
- VIXENE
- ANNA DEVINE
- LAUREN BRICE
- DUSTY ROSE
- HOLLY RYDER
- TANYA SWEET
- DESIREE MILLS
- LISA PERRY
- CHANTEL LEANE
- SUZI BARTLETT
- ALICIA ADAMS
- KRISSTARAH KNIGHT
- CHARLOTTE LEIGH
- APRIL O'TOOLE
- AMBER MIDNIGHT
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Choose your favorites and see her in *sizzling* XX (Rated sex acts with dynamic superstuds **TOTALLY UNCENSORED!** These are Full Length scenes, not those cut up previews sold by others! All tapes are factory fresh with detailed close-up action!

SATISFACTION MONEYBACK GUARANTEE!
If you're not delighted with your purchase simply return it within 30 days for a refund, credit or exchange (minus p&h). No questions asked!

Our Prices...

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Articles will stress how-to-do-it information, editing, pre- and post-production, taping techniques, program collecting and other topics of special interest. An emphasis on new products and accessories will help you add on, upgrade and enhance your video system. And in every issue, you'll find *Video Trader*, our very successful 12-page newsletter that has become the ultimate marketplace for pre-owned video. It will continue as part of VIDEO SHOPPER and contain hundreds of ads from people just like you who want to buy, sell or trade anything and everything related to video.

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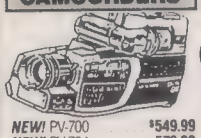
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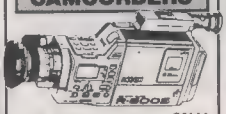
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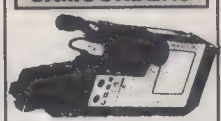
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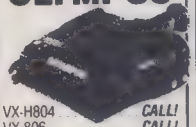
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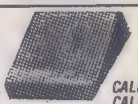
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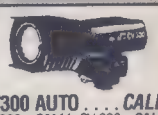
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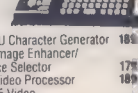
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TECH SPEAK

continued from page 33

sion went to Frank Price, Columbia Studios chief, so he could monitor the film's progress from thousands of miles away.

Because Graham's island lacked a screening room, he watched the cassettes using an 8mm VCR and a small TV monitor. As shooting progressed, the 8mm dailies grew into a stash of more than 100 two-hour cassettes, all of which were meticulously logged for individual shots and control track numbers, a necessity since, like most films, *Return* was shot out of sequence.

Each day, Graham packed the latest dailies into audio cassette cases and toted them to the shooting location. Once there, he would use the cassette logs to find specific shots and review them on a Sony Video Walkman. Being able to see what had already been shot gave him an immense advantage. He could recreate shots easily when retakes were necessary, confident the costumes, lighting and other aspects of the scene would match the surrounding shots.

Meanwhile, location scouts armed with TR4s crisscrossed the island looking for more remote, isolated spots, which they videotaped from every angle, making it possible for Graham, back at the main camp, to survey the island for places that would fit with the ones already in place.

A second unit was also active, filming scenes that didn't require Graham's presence. Since second units shoot simultaneously with the main unit, they usually work from notes, photographs or sketches. But *Return*'s second unit was able to use 8mm dubs, a second Walkman and instructions from Graham to assure perfect continuity with the camera angles, props and visual elements of the master shots.

Bob Steadman, the director of photography, also used the dubs to check the lighting on previous shots. Even though film's contrast ratio is about six times greater than video's, the cassettes were invaluable in keeping the look consistent, especially since shots within some scenes were filmed days apart.

Back in California, Graham used the 8mm dailies to plan the postproduction work, especially when it came to identifying individual shots and organizing them for the edit. Graham says the cassettes proved to be a great timesaver, leaving him more time to spend on the creative side of the production.

As for the shark attack, that was shot underwater using a professional Betacam, then transferred to 35mm film, where additional processing completed the filmic illusion. The 15 seconds on screen fully conceal their video roots. ■

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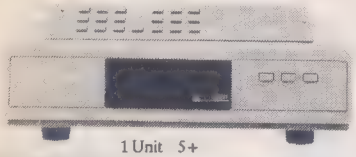
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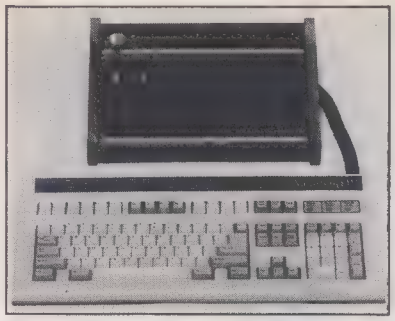
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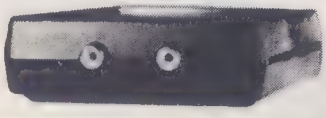
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CAMCORNER

continued from page 24

words, if a shot is supposed to end on a specific object, like a telephone, it's important to time the move to reach that object at the right moment.

For *The Birth Center*, our shots were recorded and "edited" with a Sony EDC-55 ED Beta camcorder mounted on a Bogen 3031 tripod with a W/3066 Cine/Video fluid head. For shot number three, we wanted the point of view of an expectant mother as she would see the center when it was time for the big event, so we handheld the camcorder and waddled through the front door.

Our equipment also included a seven-inch Panasonic color monitor so we could make sure the colors were right under the mixed lighting of fluorescents and the 3200-degrees Kelvin lamps of our Lowell-Light VIP Sophistikit. The monitor also helped us make more precise cuts than the small screen of the camcorder viewfinder permitted.

The finished tape ran nine minutes and 38 seconds, and included 58 shots. All the transitions were cuts, although two were made to resemble dissolves to show the viewer that some time had elapsed from the previous shot. The first such scene was set several hours after a baby had been born. The new parents were enjoying dinner in their room. To capture the feeling of time having passed, we ended the outgoing shot with a swish pan and started the incoming shot with the same move. One shot ended with a blur; the next shot began with one. The effect worked.

The second instance occurs as the mother is getting ready to take her baby home. This shot is followed by the mother, the father, a brother, a sister and a nurse leaving the hospital. To ease the transition, we faded the outgoing shot to black, then rewound the tape to a point that was not completely black and began a fade-in of the incoming shot. This fake dissolve effectively suggested time passing.

The ED Beta tape that came straight out of the camcorder served as our edit master. From this, we made a second-generation S-VHS dub of exceptional quality, which the hospital plays back on a JVC HR-S8000 VCR connected to a 50-inch Hitachi projection TV.

Best of all, from a production standpoint, the video was made in a remarkably brief period. It took us one hour to scout locations, three hours to plan the shoot, time the shots and write the shot list, six hours to actually do the shoot, and another hour to add a music track—not bad for a bouncy 9-1/2-minute tape. ■

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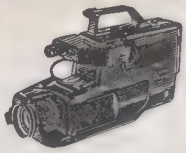
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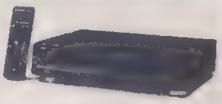
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JVC	JX-S55	Call
JVC	RM-V1000U	Call
Azden	VE-100	Call
RCA	Studio Pro	Call
Sima	Sound Mixer	Call

Audio Video Selector

JVC	JX-S100	Call
JVC	JX-S300	Call
JVC	JX-S900	Call
Azden	AV-S20	Call

Video Lights

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Sunpak	Auto CV-20S	Call
Sunpak	CV-300	99.85
Sunpak	CV-320	79.85
Sunpak	CV-150	69.85
Sunpak	CV-200	77.85

Video Lights con't

Sunpak	CL-5 Battery	59.85
Sunpak	CL-8 Battery	37.85

Character Generators

JVC	CG-P50	Call
JVC	CG-V60	Call
RCA	VTU 090	Call
RCA	CGA030	Call

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JVC	MZ-707	Call
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Azden	WMS-PRO	Call
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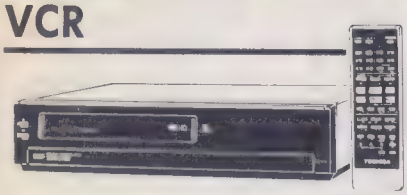
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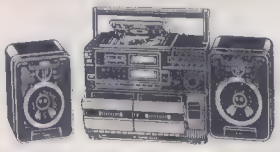
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Panasonic PV-4164 .... **$378**
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Sony CCD-TR6 ..... **$794**
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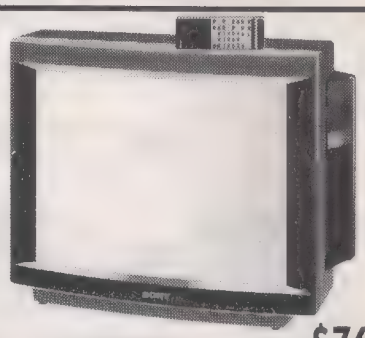
Quasar VM510 ..... **$599**
VHS-C, A/V dubbing, record and search

Quasar VM705 ..... **$689**
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Panasonic PV700 ..... **$739**
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E08

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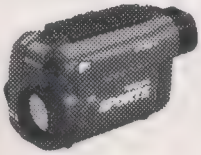
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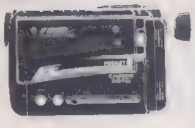
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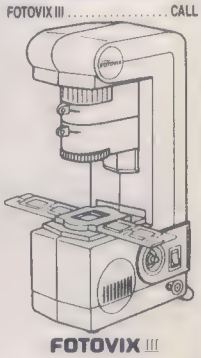
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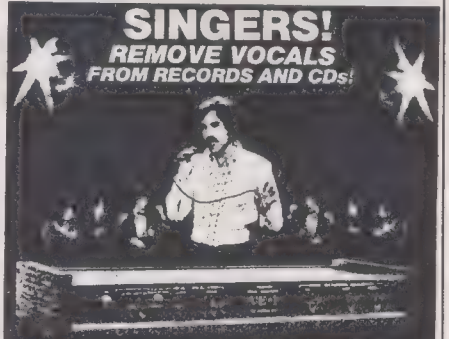
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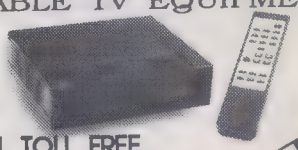
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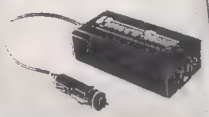
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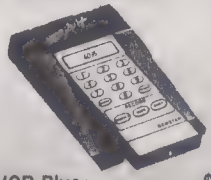
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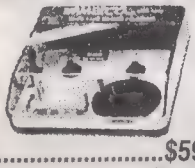
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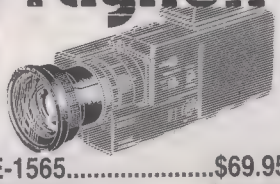
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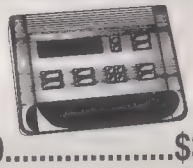
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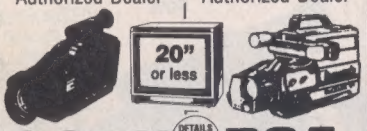
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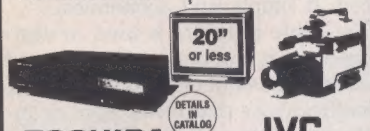


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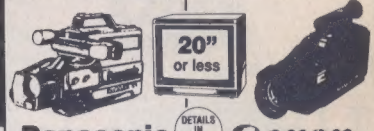
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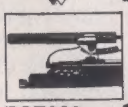
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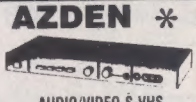


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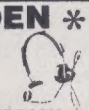


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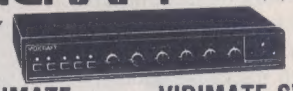


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OFF THE AIR

How many dish decoders can TVs hold?

BY ROBERT ANGUS

If there's one thing videophiles have made abundantly clear, it's that they hate the proliferation of decoders, black boxes linked by wires. A case in point is the TV-top cable box. Yet when it comes to direct-broadcast satellites, the same wonderful folks who gave us the cable converter are going to make sure we will need a freestanding box to pick up movies-on-demand and all the other good programs they're talking about feeding to tomorrow's small dishes.

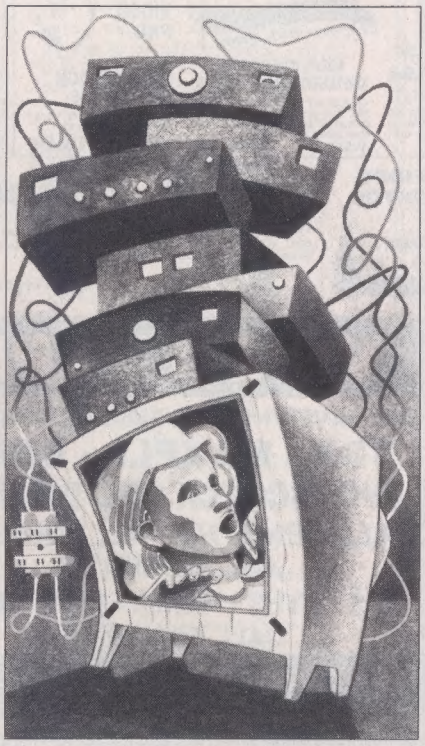
Even though direct-broadcast services haven't really happened yet, the cable industry already controls them enough to dictate how they will be marketed. PrimeStar, the only operating small-dish DBS system, is owned by a consortium of cable operators who want viewers to lease the receiving equipment—not own it outright, as large-dish satellite viewers do.

SkyPix, if it becomes the second DBS to start operations, will let viewers buy their own receiver/decoders—but viewers won't be able to use them to watch PrimeStar programs or those of any other DBS services, even though the same dish may be able to handle both. Viewers will need a second freestanding black box. A major investor in SkyPix is the QVC shopping channel, heavily beholden to cable operators, which will also handle some marketing chores plus program ordering and billing.

It doesn't have to be this way. Small-dish DBS has been a reality in Europe and Japan for several years. In both areas, viewers can buy TV sets with satellite receivers and descrambling modules built in. In fact, of the 9.4 million color TV sets sold in Japan last year, about one in five included a satellite receiver. For screen sizes above 23 inches, the figure was closer to half.

It's been almost 10 years since Nokia, a major Scandinavian electronics manufacturer, showed a TV receiver with a circuit board featuring plug-in modules, including one that received satellite signals. A companion card would descramble programs the TV set owner had paid to watch. Nokia's idea was to let consumers add modules for AM/FM radio, teletext, wireless remote control and other features as they chose, when they could afford them. But Nokia was told that in the United States, Underwriters' Laboratories would never list a TV receiver giving consumers so much access to the set's inner workings. As a result, the company redesigned the set so that a technician would be needed to add any features the customer chose at the time of purchase.

Today, it's not UL's fault that built-in satellite receivers aren't going to be available in U.S. TV sets. In Japan, leading manufacturers have been successfully selling TV sets that could win UL approval with no problem. But no large manufacturer is going to produce a TV set that will receive only one of several types of DBS, or make integrated TV receivers for the variety of DBS systems likely to appear if present plans proceed. It simply isn't economical.



CHRIS SCHMIDT

The cable industry is used to controlling its own programs and plant, and to making consumers foot the bill for any inefficiencies that result from deliberately creating non-standard equipment. There's no incentive for cable to select as standard a single receiver that could be built into your 1995 TV set, a receiver that would allow you to choose whether to subscribe to SkyPix, PrimeStar, some other DBS service or all three—or permit you to switch from one to another if you're dissatisfied with your original choice.

Standardization would have to be imposed on the DBS industry from the outside, presumably by the Federal Communications Commission, which muffed the chance to perform a similar service 10 years ago when it failed to adopt a single standard for AM stereo. Fortunately, there are signs that the anti-regulatory philosophy of some commissioners is fading, but it may not be enough to encourage the FCC to do its job and mandate a single DBS format that would allow room for a proprietary descrambler interface so that Sony, Panasonic, Hitachi, Toshiba, Philips and the others could keep at least one unnecessary black box off the tops of our TV sets.

Ironically, DBS was supposed to be the competitive force that would keep cable honest by providing the yardstick with which to compare cable costs and service. It doesn't look as if that's going to happen now, although it may not yet be too late for Congress or the FCC to demand that cable divest itself of DBS holdings.

The situation is more than a bit reminiscent of the '40s and '50s when a company called National City Lines began buying up streetcar systems in larger cities. Only after NCL scrapped the energy-efficient trolleys for buses was it revealed that NCL's major stockholders included General Motors, tire manufacturers and oil companies. So make room on your TV set for yet one more black box. You're going to need it. ■

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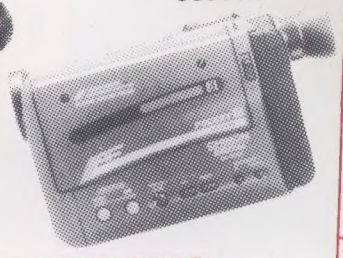
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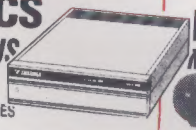


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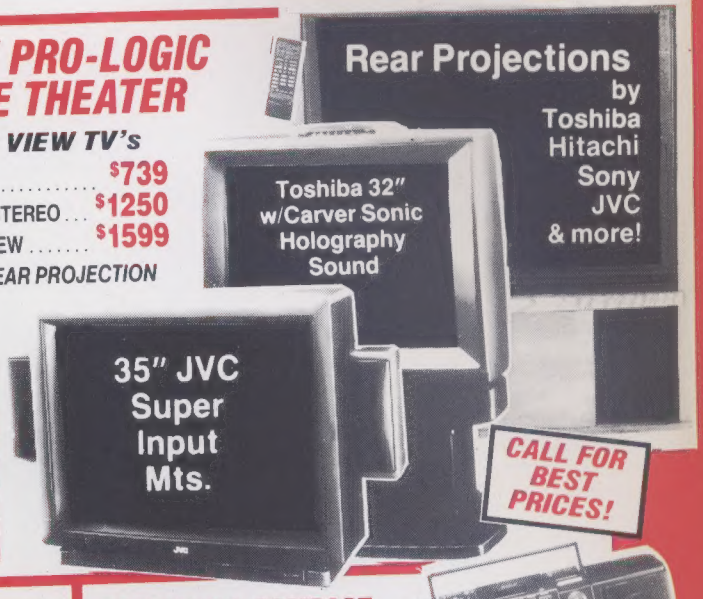
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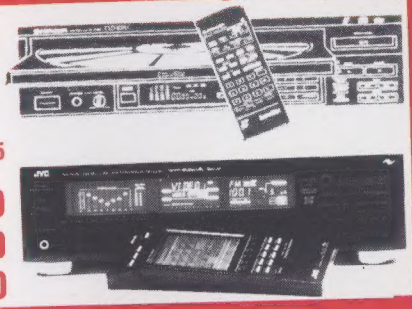
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